



*Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond*  
**December 10 – 18, 2015**

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# Aboriginal Arts & Culture

## **CURATING THE NORTH: DOCUMENTARY SCREENING ETHICS AND INUIT REPRESENTATION IN (FESTIVAL) CINEMA**

4 POSTED BY EZRA WINTON - DECEMBER 17, 2015 -  
SCREEN, CONVERSATIONS, FEATURES

Documentary festivals are certainly not immune to scandal and controversy, and this year's RIDM, which took place in Montreal in November 2015, was no exception. Following on the heels of the festival's public screenings of Dominic Gagnon's film *Of the North*, Inuit artists like Tanya Tagaq and Alethea Arnaquq-Baril took to social media to express their dismay, anger and frustration over the inclusion of an ethically problematic film in the festival's program.

The resulting fallout revealed a deep chasm in the industry, where limited knowledge of Indigenous peoples and cinema was met with de-contextualized defenses of art and proclamations that an overly sensitive public was misguided by their limited knowledge of avant-garde filmmaking practices. As a film programmer and educator I was compelled to speak about the controversy with filmmaker Arnaquq-Baril from her home in Iqaluit, Nunavut Territory.\* (Above image of courtesy John Burrridge.)

**Ezra Winton : Alethea, thank you for agreeing to take time for this important conversation. My first question is how did you find out about *Of the North* and what was your initial reaction to it?**

Alethea Arnaquq-Baril : A woman saw the film at RIDM and contacted me because she was upset and concerned. She had spent time in the North, and knowing that it was about Inuit I was curious and she sent me a link to the film. So I hadn't heard anything about it until then, I had no idea this film was made or touring festivals in Canada and Europe or anything until this woman who had been North before and lived among Inuit saw it and spoke out about it.

**And you watched it and what was your initial reaction?**

I had a hard time finishing it, but I forced myself because I knew, pretty much right away, that I couldn't just sit quiet about it and so I had to see it. But before I'd even seen the film I had read that he [Gagnon] had never been North, had maybe never met an Inuk and that the film was just full of drunken Inuit. So, just knowing that a film like that played at RIDM was pretty upsetting to me.

So I forced myself to finish watching the film and I can only say—I can't think of another way to describe my reaction except that I just felt physically ill—starting about 10 minutes into the film I was disgusted, and it just got worse throughout. I think it hasn't

been widely seen by Inuit but all of the Inuit that have seen it used these exact words: they felt physically ill.

**What was it about the images you were seeing that was causing such a intense affective or bodily reaction?**

To start, I think the nudity with the women really felt dangerous to me. I mean, there were just two clips but they weren't short, and talk about gratuitous, I have no idea what purpose those shots serve besides maybe stirring up some controversy or notoriety for the film, but they were just so disgustingly irresponsible to include for no justifiable reason.

And seeing people that I know in the film, at their worst, having hit rock bottom, knowing that they're humans, they're fully formed people with emotions and families, and this man just treated them like anonymous nameless soulless people. Less than people really.

It was difficult to sit there and watch, I mean it's not pleasant to watch anyone who's drunk and throwing up, it's not pleasant just to watch a full minute-long clip of that no matter who the person is. But when you see it over and over again in the film I would think: another one, *really*? And, why this much? These weren't just little clips, they were often long.

It was torture to watch these things.

And throughout the film I kept thinking: it's relentless and this film isn't saying anything except this is what Inuit life is like. It seemed to me that that's what this film was saying, that this is what our society looks like, and that's not what my life looks like, it's not what my family's life looks like. I don't look around me and see that most of the time. It is portraying Inuit society as the stereotype that we've been living with for so, so long.



Frame grab from Of the North

**And how do you respond to Gagnon's rejoinder that he wasn't making a film that was meant to be pleasant, that in fact it was meant to be difficult?**

Yes, I found that really condescending.

The way he said it, it's like he was implying that I'd rather he just make it a happy, feel-good film and only show the good side of Inuit life, which is not at all the truth. He also spoke as if we don't understand the concept of making a film from found footage, which is also really condescending. I'm a filmmaker—I understand that.

My friend Caroline Monnet is an Indigenous filmmaker who recently made a breathtaking film called *Mobilize* using entirely found footage. She also used Tanya Tagaq's music, but she actually got permission. Maybe Dominic also makes great films from found footage, I just don't think this particular film is one of them.

And, speaking of Indigenous cinema in general, there are a lot of heavy, difficult films out there made by Indigenous people and I would argue that the vast majority of Indigenous films are difficult and facing our issues head on. He was just showing his ignorance, he didn't know. It seems to me he knows nothing about Indigenous cinema and he knows nothing about Indigenous people. That became very clear to me when I saw the film.

And hearing his comments afterwards, I'm shocked that somebody would program his film in a major festival, give it an award, and that prominent people in our industry would stand up and defend this work. I wasn't shocked that someone like him would make the film, but I *was* shocked that it could be programmed. I've never run a festival, but I suspect at least a couple of people would have had to have watched it.

Then on top of that, for it to screen and win an award in Switzerland. I thought the Western world was just a little bit more knowledgeable by now, I thought we were farther along in race relations than we actually are I guess. So it was enlightening for me, and depressing, because I thought we were better than that by now.

And it made me question how people see me now.

When I travel outside of my home, I have to feel like I'm always going to be second-guessing what people are seeing in me, if they see me as a human, if they're going to be assuming I'm a drunk, are they going to be assuming that I just can't help myself, and that I have to be saved.

I've always been a very optimistic person—I don't want to be miserable and cynical, and the response to this film and the support for it from important people in our industry is making it really hard for me to stay an optimistic Indigenous filmmaker.

**With that in mind, I'd like to talk about the context of support for the film. Here is part of the description in the RIDM program for *Of the North*, written by Bruno Dequen, one of the top programmers at RIDM:** *"...the roughness of the recordings and fascinating but also unsettling throat singing, the film not only presents Inuit self-perceptions, but those of a filmmaker who, driven by the uncanny intensity of a people who live in a merciless environment, exacerbates the violence, culture shock and fierce beauty of a world that becomes, before his eyes, a true Interzone."*  
"A true Interzone"?

**I'm not familiar with that phrase either. I am wondering if he means an Interzone between cultures. I find the write-up illustrative of the way the RIDM programmers perceived the film (as opposed to the filmmaker, the audiences, the people represented). What do you think about these words such as the roughness and merciless environment and culture shock, exacerbating the violence, etc? It all sounds very spectacular.**

Yes. It makes me think of when they had Inuit in cages in New York City and Paris and all that. It's poverty porn. It's trauma porn. Let's watch these tortured people and feel better about our lives.

**But then there is Gagnon and the RIDM programmers claiming this is an exercise of self-representation/perception—that we non-Indigenous people or non-Inuit are seeing the ways in which Inuit perceive themselves, presumably because they've recorded and captured the images and uploaded them to YouTube. This is one of the central threads in their support and justification for the programming of the film.**

I would say the majority of the people in the film, almost every single one did not necessarily want to be on camera, they were recorded by someone else and uploaded by someone else. So to say it's self-perception is ridiculous. And to try to claim that this is how Inuit perceive ourselves is also ridiculous. We're always fighting against this stereotype.

I was looking at YouTube clips uploaded by Inuit after I watched this film, just to see how quickly a clip of a drunken Inuk came up, and I couldn't find one. I just started scrolling through clips and I couldn't find one. This guy had to really search out clips of drunken Inuit. It's as if he went searching for clips of "drunk Inuit" or "drunk Eskimo."

This is a decision he made to portray us this way. He went in with his own perception; it's not a reflection of how Inuit perceive ourselves. It's not a perception of how I see myself, that's for damn sure.

That's not to say we don't have addiction issues in our communities. We do, we talk about it a lot, we desperately need help, we desperately need funding for addiction treatment centres. We don't have capital funding, even though Inuit are crying out for it year after year after year.

It's not like we want to avoid this issue and it's not like we're denying that we have addiction issues at higher levels than the rest of the country. But this film does nothing, *nothing*, to talk about the causes and possible solutions for this problem. And it paints a picture that we are all addicted, and that's not the truth. We have higher rates of addiction because we have higher rates of trauma. But we are not all drunks, and this film makes it seem like we're all drunks.



**There are two other reactions that I've encountered from non-Indigenous people, in response to both the festival controversy around the film and to the film itself. In the context of the festival programming, I've heard several people argue that RIDM has sparked a debate and conversation, and isn't that a good thing? And isn't that what documentary is supposed to do?**

My response to that has been to ask: at whose cost are we having that debate? And what *is* the debate, really? The second reaction that I've heard is from people who've seen the film and say it's very complex and very beautiful and this is just a typical PC [Politically Correct] reaction. What do you think about such responses?

It hasn't sparked quality debate. All it's done is force us to say no we're not all drunks, and it's not right to portray us all as drunks. That's as far as the conversation has been able to go in the mainstream media.

People only have so much attention for Indigenous issues. It sucks that when something like this comes up we only have two minutes of airtime, and in that two minutes, the whole moment has to be taken up with the statement: *we're not all drunks*.

I'm so fucking tired of having to take our two minutes of opportunity, of airtime, to say, "I'm not a drunk." I'm done saying that. The conversation should be deeper than that, and we're not getting the opportunity to do that when a film like this is shown.

By that logic, we should be screening films of wall-to-wall Muslim terrorists in order to spark debate on the issue of terrorism. By that logic we should be using films that portray black people as violent criminals to talk about race. But that is not helpful, it's not the truth, it doesn't portray the people accurately. Rather it enforces really old and really ridiculous stereotypes, and the fact that I have to say that in this day and age is outrageous.

**I agree and I think saying that it's a PC reaction is linked to this idea that it's a form of censorship in a PC culture where you can't do or say anything controversial, but the discourse around that is privileging the dominant white society, and allowing them to decide the terms.**

Yes.

**So my reaction is: maybe it's PC with some of the white liberal folks who are morally outraged yet who haven't even seen the film, I don't know. But it's not PC when the criticism is coming from the people whose community is represented. When their reaction is one of hurt and being harmed, how can you call that a PC reaction?**

You know, whoever is calling the critical reaction to this film overly sensitive and PC is so utterly ignorant about life in the North. You cannot watch this film and feel that way. You can't if you have any idea what it's like to live up here, and the issues we face. Not if you're suggesting that this film has pushed boundaries and brings up a good kind of controversy.

The curators at festivals or broadcasters have a responsibility—I mean, it’s their job. Films are made all the time about other cultures, and it’s something that festivals have to do on a regular basis: to assess whether a film is entertaining, whether it’s honest, whether it’s helpful. This should be something that festivals should be thinking about with every single film that they program.

Who is the audience and who are the storytellers and do they have a right to tell the story they’re telling? Do they understand the responsibility they carry? Does the storyteller understand the responsibility, and do the programmers? It’s something that should always be in the front of their minds

I was looking at that CBC article about the CBC removing the comment section on any story to do with Indigenous people until January at the earliest. It’s sad that that’s necessary, but I was really happy to see that they’re doing that because any story that involves Inuit, the first comments are... Well, just last night I was looking at one about the Edmonton Eskimos and the first comment was, “why don’t you just go back to your bottle of vodka.” And the next comment expanded on that joke, and said, “wait, don’t you mean Lysol?” And that’s what I see on a daily basis. *Daily*. So to say that this film is pushing new ground, it isn’t: it’s old news.



Frame grab from *Of the North*

**It’s not just old news, it’s not a unique perspective. You can find it anywhere—as you say, in the comments section of CBC.ca, or in many other films or other artworks.**

It’s everywhere in our country. And I thought it was just the trolls, but apparently it’s our festival programmers, too.

**That brings me to my next question, from my perspective as a documentary programmer and someone interested in festival/curatorial practices. I’m working with Shannon Walsh on a project around documentary screening ethics and moving the conversation beyond the consideration of the relationship between the artist and the subject, to one that considers the film in the social world and the ways in which it has an impact on cultures and with audiences. It’s about the ethical implications of a film that is curated and exhibited, and realizing that it’s not just the content of the film we should concern ourselves with.**

**We have documentary festivals that are predominantly run by white people, by those of us from settler culture, where programmers are not Indigenous (unless it's an Indigenous-themed festival). And there's an entire subset of the industry of non-Indigenous people making films about Indigenous culture and politics. Many of these are good, but it needs to be said that we have non-Indigenous people making films about Indigenous people, and then we have non-Indigenous (mostly white) people programming those films.**

Yes.

**I'm curious what you think about this context, about this ethics gap in the process (where we consider not just the content of the film, but the context of film programming and exhibition). And what do you think festivals like RIDM and in particular festivals showing Indigenous works or works that portray Indigenous people could or should be doing differently?**

Well, I think it's helpful to be educated about Indigenous cinema first of all. And I agree, first of all, there are plenty of excellent films made about Indigenous people made by non-Indigenous people—that is possible, there are great ones out there. So by no means do I argue that only Indigenous people should make Indigenous films, and I feel that needs to be said.

As an Indigenous person, that's how I feel. Outside perspectives can be helpful. But I've also seen films about Indigenous people made by non-Indigenous people that weren't really saying anything new, or were just steeped in outsider perspective that was full of assumptions that may or may not be true or helpful, or insightful in any way.

Sometimes it's like this: oh look, I got to see these exotic people and here is my experience. And as a curator of that kind of content, it's helpful to have seen a lot of Indigenous cinema to know something about it, to know whether that story's already been told a thousand times or not, whether it's saying anything important, whether it's furthering discussion, whether it's cutting-edge or way behind the times.

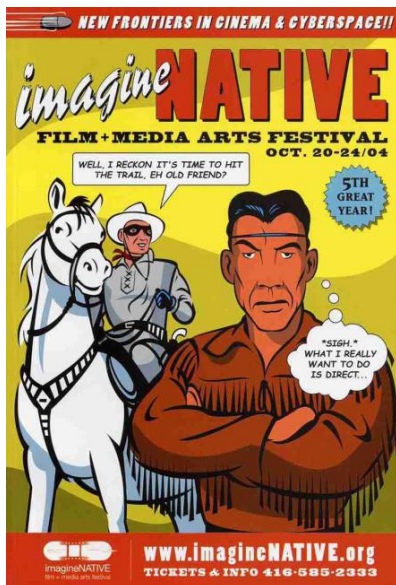
With regards to Dominic [Gagnon]'s film, it seems both he and programmers thought it was cutting-edge, yet to me it's way behind the times—it's ancient history; it's how people felt about us in the 1950s. So if they had any concept of what life is like, not just what life is like in the North now but what has been said about us in the past, this film would not have happened.

I think it's really important for people to get educated, not just about Indigenous people but about Indigenous cinema. Dominic and the entire staff of RIDM should attend ImagineNATIVE next year.

And when I first saw the film I thought who the hell did the E&O (Errors and Omissions) insurance, because there are prominent figures in the film who obviously didn't want to be in it, they didn't even want to be in the original YouTube clips, never mind in an internationally distributed film. And then I realized maybe this film isn't intended for broadcast and maybe he didn't have to go through the E&O process. In which case I think maybe festivals should be doing some thinking around programming films of

primarily found footage whereby they should know whether or not a film has been through the E&O process.

And if the film is primarily found footage, maybe somebody should be taking a second to think: are the people in the clips willing to be in this film? Are they willing to even be in the original clips? Maybe there's an additional onus on the festival to ensure that it's not chockablock full of people who absolutely do not want to be prominently featured in a negative film.



imagineNATIVE Film Festival Poster

**So you're suggesting a more pointed conversation with the filmmaker about those kinds of ethical and legal implications, especially when it's something like found footage?**

Yes, and maybe they can still decide to take that risk, maybe the film is really important and saying something really important and they can decide to program it anyway, but they should at least be asking those questions, and I do not believe that RIDM did that in this case. I don't think it was given a thought.

And I don't think Dominic expected or wanted Inuit to see the film. If he had, he might have proposed screening it up here. But when he was asked if any Inuit had seen the film, he said: well, they're going to see it now because of the media attention is all over it (Because we—Tanya [Tagaq] and Kelly [Fraser] and I—started making complaints publically.) And that to me said that he wasn't expecting Inuit to see it or maybe hoping that we wouldn't, or he assumes that we live way off in the remote Arctic and how will we ever know, as if we don't have Facebook or Twitter.

**Maybe there's a way of making the curatorial process more just. At Cinema Politica, we are often unsure about films with regards to representation because of who made the film and how a certain marginalized community is represented. In those moments we reach out to our programming community consultants for advice.**

**These are people from those particular communities, they're often filmmakers and/or activists, and they're willing to watch the films for us and then give us their take. That helps us in the decision-making process enormously. Do you think that festivals could or should be doing something similar?**

Yes, well, I would hope that if they're a larger festival with a large number of staff, then some of that staff might be from another culture other than the dominant cultures. It's good to have a filter or perspective, someone who is a visible minority or someone from a different culture or who even speaks a different language, who can bring another view and provide that most basic filter. And that's extremely valuable when your business or organization is showcasing cultural content from around the world—that's a very basic step that can be taken.

But also, when something is questionable or asking tough questions or representing a very marginalized people, then yes, at the very least, Dominic or RIDM or whoever could've just said, hey, maybe we should show this film to an Inuk and see what they think. That is a very easy thing to do. So yes, I absolutely think that that would be a very good practice to implement across the industry.



**It seems like the festival feels that what they just needed to do was have a better screening context in which maybe Indigenous/Inuit people were invited to speak about the film, or something of the sort. I'm wondering if for you that solves the issue of this film being a stereotypical or racist representation of Inuit? Would steps like that have done anything to help?**

Yes. I think the value in that is creating dialogue, discussion, debate around the difficult issues we face. And so I find that it was a very questionable decision to screen it and to not ensure there were some Inuit there or at least invited.

But that's beside the point with this film. They completely missed the point with that comment [RIDM's public statement about the handling of the screening of the film]. Yes, you need to think about how you screen a film, and if it's difficult material that brings up issues that need to be discussed, then yes, you need to make that happen, and you need to consider how you present it.

But you also need to consider the film itself and RIDM truly doesn't get why this film is so reckless and damaging. Their statement, like the film, shows a willful ignorance and a lack of humility. Rather than consider the possibility that they might have made a mistake, they assume that these Inuit aren't sophisticated enough to understand art at this level.

You know, it's not just the fact that it's chock-full of shots of drunken Inuit, that's not the only thing. It's also the way that industry and development is presented, and the destructive resource extraction industry, the way that's portrayed in the film, juxtaposed with what seems to be an Inuit society disintegrating and falling in on itself.

The way all of that that is cut together, it just feels like the film is saying: look what we're doing, we're just sending these huge faceless corporations up there to extract the wealth, meanwhile we don't give a shit about the people and they're just imploding and disintegrating and why aren't we helping them?

I suspect it's that perceived message that makes the film "beautiful" to some. My guess is that this is the good intention behind the film – Dominic won't explain himself, so I have to guess. I can't imagine why otherwise anyone would think this film is worthwhile, other than suggesting "we should be doing something more for these people".

But I need to explain why this portrayal is so damaging. It's showing a part of Inuit society that is really struggling, portraying it as if that state of things is the way most of society is up here. That's damaging.

But also, what I find really irresponsible is presenting our situation as though we've fallen in on ourselves without the help of outsiders. It's saying to me that the role of the rest of Canada in our destruction has been a passive one. It's been one where the damage is incidental: we're just casualties of development and that without having our hand held, we fall apart and kill ourselves with alcohol.

It takes the responsibility and the history away. Our state of trauma and dysfunction is not a result of being saved or not being saved. It is the result of active destruction by the Canadian government and the Canadian people.

It's as if this film is completely ignoring the fact that we were under attack for decades, a century almost, that there was decisive action meant to wipe us off the face of the planet, trying to kill our culture and assimilate our people and hope that we would integrate and disappear eventually.

And this was a conscious decision by the Canadian government and the church that was supported by the Canadian people, and there was wave upon wave of these attacks. These were calculated, purposeful acts of destruction against our people.

And it was not passive, it wasn't incidental, it wasn't accidental, it was a decisive action. And this film makes it feel accidental. And to me that's the most damaging aspect of the film: for our society as a whole.

Now, concerning the individuals in the film, obviously including them without their permission, that's the most damaging for them as individuals. But as a society, as a culture, as a people, in my opinion the most damaging thing is presenting us as if we're helpless and need to have our hands held.

And it's a very patronizing view to suggest that it's just industry coming up here without doing anything to save us—that that's the cause of our destruction. When really, it was so much more active than that. I rambled a bit there...



Frame grab from Of the North

**No it's good. It's about agency and it's also about placating responsibility. It's easier for Southerners to think that the North is so broken and the people so broken, the culture so dysfunctional because there are rapacious corporations doing the things that they're doing up there without regard for the people, and that this is the cause of their troubles.**

And you're right, that evacuates the history and the historical context of colonization and racism by the Canadian government, and with Canadian people supporting it in the South. So I think it's an excellent point.

They don't want to think that they're culpable in our demise, because they're not the ones who made these harmful decisions. It's still difficult to think that your parents or grandparents or your ancestors were culpable, that they took part in these decisions and supported them and viewed Inuit as less than human.

People don't want to admit that their own families and their ancestors were part of that. And it's understandable; it's a difficult thing to face. Being part Inuk and part French Canadian, I struggle with that internally.

But we need to face it, as a country. And by ignoring that history and denying that your families were a part of that destruction it just continues that trauma, and maybe it's less direct and less actively destructive. Denying its existence and its importance, the importance of recognizing what happened, *today*, is its own violence.

Because when people don't know this history, they can't fully understand why we are struggling the way we are. It doesn't make sense, so they think we must be inferior in some way. This film is unconsciously teaching its viewers that Inuit are inferior.

**I agree. In my film classes we've discussed the notion of burden of representation, with regards to pioneer filmmakers from marginalized, mis- and under-represented communities (for example the first Black Canadian to make a feature fiction film). The burden of representation is about the pressures put on these artists to speak for, and accurately and fairly represent their communities.**

And I sense that this burden of representation has shifted to a kind of burden of interpretation, where settler society and white Canadians make films like *Of The North* that are in turn programmed by white institutions, and then the community represented and harmed by the dissemination of these films then have the burden to interpret those representations and to educate the dominant society. And so you hear for example African-Americans who say: why do we have to constantly educate white America about stereotypes and race and racism?

And here in Canada there's so far to go: my students say they've learned nothing about Indigenous history, people and culture in high school, that they're *still* only learning about the fur trade, much like when I was in high school decades ago. So I'm wondering if you could talk about this burden of interpretation and education, the ways in which you, Tanya Tagaq and other Indigenous and Inuit people have been super engaged in since this RIDM fiasco happened.



Yes, I mean, we're expected to be experts on everything. For instance, I'm a documentary filmmaker so I feel like it's my job to think about my society, its place in our country, the state of my culture and my people and the issues we face, so I'm in that headspace already anyway. But someone like Tanya Tagaq who's a vocal artist, she should not have to be an expert on filmmaking and what working with found footage means, etc.

And you know, she shouldn't have to be a warrior on behalf of our entire people all the time. She does it, thank goodness for her and her willingness to do that, because she has the platform to do it. People listen when she speaks, so it's wonderful that she does, but it sucks that she has to. It's unfair and it sucks. And until we have Indigenous issues and history and culture taught in all the schools from preschool on, it won't change.

It is great to see what's happening out west now, there are a couple of universities that are putting in mandatory Indigenous Studies courses, which is wonderful to see. I hope that happens across the board from preschool through to post-grad studies.

Until we have that, then I have to be pretty well versed on just about anything I can think of, and when something comes up in the news that feels unfair, that doesn't feel right, I have to scurry and read as much as I can about it and find academic articles coming from other Indigenous people's perspectives or from other people of colour—I have to look that up as quick as I can.

We don't already have those discussions written down from Inuit society, I learn and borrow from other marginalized peoples and study up on it, the terminology used and schools of thought, and it's extremely helpful to be able to do that. But that's just the way life is and I hope that as the school systems change—and I think they are changing gradually—then hopefully that burden will be less for my son than it is for me.

*\* This interview has been edited for clarity and length. A full-length version will be published as part of the “Ethically Suspect” project by Shannon Walsh and Ezra Winton in 2016-17.*

## **BIOS**

**Alethea Arnaquq-Baril** is an Inuit filmmaker from the Canadian arctic where she runs Unikkaar Studios Inc. In her award-winning APTN documentary *Tunniit: Retracing the Lines of Inuit Tattoos* (ImagineNATIVE 2011 premiere) Alethea traveled across the arctic to speak with elders about Inuit tattoo practices and the causes of their near disappearance, before getting her own traditional face tattoos.

Alethea directed the well-traveled ICSL short “Inuit High Kick”, and co-produced with White Pine Pictures “Experimental Eskimos”, a Barry Greenwald feature documentary (Hot Docs, DGC Allan King Award 2010). Alethea directed the NFB animation “Lumaajuuq: The Blind Boy and the Loon” (Best Canadian Short Drama – imagineNATIVE 2010, Golden Sheaf Award for Best Aboriginal – Yorkton 2011).

Alethea directed the animated short “Sloth”, one of 15 shorts selected by renowned film programmer **Danny Lennon** for Telefilm’s *Perspective Canada* screenings at the Cannes Film Market. Alethea was also an executive producer on Miranda de Pencier’s award-winning *Throat Song*, produced by Stacey Aglok MacDonald (TIFF 2012 premiere, Canadian Screen Award – Best Live Action Short Drama, Academy Awards shortlist 2014).

Alethea co-produced *Arctic Defenders*, a feature documentary by John Walker (nominee for DGC Allan King Award 2014, Best Doc – Atlantic Film Fest). Most recently, Alethea directed *Aviliaq: Entwined* as part of the Embargo Project, premiering at ImagineNATIVE 2014. Currently, Alethea is directing *Angry Inuk* (NFB co-production in association with EyeSteelFilm) a feature doc for broadcast on Superchannel about how Inuit are coming up with new and provocative ways to deal with international seal hunting controversies.

**Ezra Winton** is Assistant Professor of Film Studies at Concordia University and holds a PhD in Communication Studies from Carleton University. His research and teaching interests include film festivals, Indigenous and alternative media, as well as social movements, and documentary cinema, institutions and culture.

Ezra is the co-founder and Director of Programming of Cinema Politica, the world’s largest grassroots documentary screening network, and is a contributing editor at *POV Magazine* and *Art Threat*. Recent publications include *Challenge for Change: Activist Documentary at the National Film Board of Canada* (2010, with Tom Waugh and Michael Brendan Baker) and *Screening Truth to Power: A Reader on Documentary Activism* (2014, with Svetla Turnin). He is currently working on a monograph for University of Toronto Press that looks at Alanis Obomsawin’s classic documentary *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*.

Direct Link: <http://artthreat.net/2015/12/alethea-arnaquq-baril/>

## Lullabies in Cree, English and French inspired by multicultural family



Nadia Gaudet and Jason Burnstick released the nine-track *Dream Big, Little One* in Cree, English and French. (cbc)

**Sunday December 20, 2015**

A new album of lullabies is sure to have your little one dreaming big.

Winnipeg-based, musical duo Jason Burnstick and Nadia Gaudet have just released a new CD with a multicultural twist.

The nine lullabies that make up *Dream Big, Little One / Fais de beaux rêves, petit ange / Misti pami apistiwasia* are performed in English, French and Cree.



The nine-track CD was inspired by the duo's multi-lingual family. (supplied)

Gaudet, who is Francophone-Métis, said the project began with a song she wrote with her nine-year-old niece Jayva last Christmas. Her niece is bilingual so it was natural for her to sing in both languages.

"Then, she very sassily came up to me and said, 'now we have to record it and put it on an album,'" Gaudet laughed.

*So nine songs later we recorded all these songs and it just naturally came about that they were in these different languages that we speak or are a part of our lives.- Nadia Gaudet*

Burnstick said he spoke some Cree as a child, but his language was lost after being apprehended by Manitoba Child and Family Services as a child.

Now, as an adult, he's learning Cree again.

"[I] still have a long way to go, but [I'm] definitely taking the road there."

Burnstick said the album was also written for their dog Little Diamond who, at 14, passed away that same year.

It was a healing project for the couple, said Burnstick. "We started writing the music, we started writing these songs, I guess, for her in a sense, inspired by people and even by pets in our lives."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/tiny-houses-many-gifts-and-paying-it-forward-1.3369642/lullabies-in-cree-english-and-french-inspired-by-multicultural-family-1.3371564>

# Trader's tales: Northern memoir recounts life in the gigantic wilderness

Reviewed by: Barry Craig

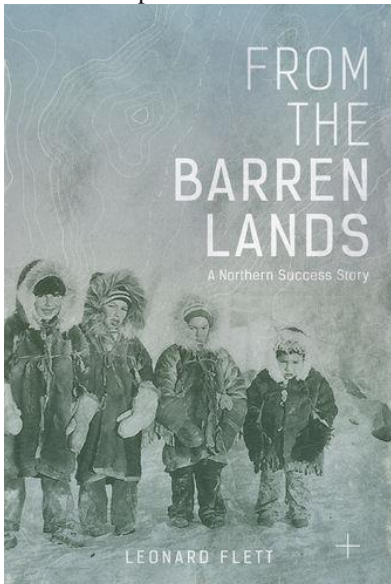
Posted: 12/19/2015 3:00 AM

In the 1960s, a plane carrying federal cabinet minister Judy LaMarsh touched down in the Far North.

When everyone -- mostly Inuit -- had gathered in the community hall to meet her, she announced with outstretched, motherly arms: "I come to you from great silver bird in the sky."



Flett's descriptions of life at northern trading posts are his most entertaining passages.



To which a local in the front row turned to the person beside him and broadcasted, in a purposefully booming voice, "She means she flew."

Things have markedly improved since LaMarsh, but the insulting superior attitude and paternalism of white southerners for their northern counterparts is still there, including their prejudice for the aboriginal majority -- whether Inuit, First Nations or Métis.

While this incident isn't in the book, *From the Barren Lands* is a promising personal memoir because author Leonard Flett, recounting the lives of the people in this gigantic wilderness, doesn't carry any of the same prejudicial baggage -- he is aboriginal himself.

The Barren Lands is a huge wilderness area west of Hudson Bay that runs to the Arctic coast. It's twice the size of Manitoba and on visiting there's a visceral feeling nobody's been there before.

Flett writes with joy about being a kid, born in 1942 at the fur-trading post run by his father for the venerable Hudson's Bay Company, within sight of Hudson Bay. His mother was Cree and his father a descendant of a northern Scot who crossed the Atlantic 169 years ago to work in the fur trade for the HBC. "I consider myself a First Nations person and hold a treaty card."

The man's accomplishments in business and his contributions to the advancement of his people commercially, financially and socially are formidable -- Flett was awarded the Order of Canada in 2004.

Flett loves Canada, even when he catalogues its sorry treatment of indigenous people as he sees it: outrageous broken promises, the theft of land, racism, brainwashing by the church and the historic desire to destroy native ways and culture by the church and federal government. (His remarks may be tendentious to some.)

Flett worked 41 years in the business, the majority of it for the Hudson's Bay Company in its posts and northern retail stores in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Ontario. He started at the bottom in the HBC under his father in 1964 and ended up at the top of the executive ladder as vice-president of the company until his retirement in 2005. The HBC Northern Stores were bought out in 1987 and renamed the North West Company in 1990.

Flett hired the company's first aboriginal management trainees and its first female management trainee. He also introduced an imaginative arrangement between the company and First Nations communities that means both benefit from the company's presence.

But it's his incidental descriptions of what it was like on those far-away and isolated trading posts of the legendary HBC that makes this book spring to life as an entertaining read.

There's the note that all HBC traders were issued written instructions on how to extract the teeth of their customers and a set of pincers with which to do it (no painkillers were included). There are Flett's descriptions of small herds of caribou routinely and leisurely passing by the windows of the Flett home/trading post.

There's the account (via Flett's father) of Canadian author Farley Mowat coming into their trading post 225 kilometres inland from Churchill in 1947 and stiffing him for \$229.65 in supplies. And there's Flett's description of the perils of outdoor sanitation in a bitter northern winter -- a piece of lumber kept in the outhouse to knock down the frozen feces that would pile up.

"I love our country. I love our flag," says Flett.

Sadly, he won't be around all that much longer to enjoy it. Near the end of his memoir he says he is expected to die between 2016 and 2018 of a chronic condition diagnosed in 2013.

His matter-of-fact, unvarnished manner of publicly disclosing his pending death says a great deal about the character of the man.

*Winnipeg writer Barry Craig lived in the North.*

Republished from the Winnipeg Free Press print edition December 19, 2015 D23

**Direct Link:** <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/entertainment/books/traders-ales-363018821.html>

## **First Nations actor from Vancouver Island plays key role alongside DiCaprio in The Revenant**

BY DANA GEE, THE PROVINCE DECEMBER 21, 2015

Duane Howard has a three-strike rule. But in his case, the third strike is not a bad thing.

“Anytime someone comes to me once, twice then comes to me a third time, it’s like, ‘OK, I have to act on it now,’” said the Vancouver Island-born actor.

The rule came into effect last year when, after a year away from acting, he was coaxed back into it by friends who told him -- on three different occasions -- that a big Hollywood production was looking for indigenous actors. In particular, one was needed for a pivotal role.

The movie was The Revenant, starring Leonardo DiCaprio and directed by Academy Award-winner (Birdman) Alejandro González Iñárritu.

Howard, originally from Port Alberni, got the audition for Elk Dog, the film’s lead Arikara warrior. He impressed the casting people with his look, his history and his command of the Nuuchah-nulth language. Three days later he found himself in Calgary meeting Iñárritu.

“He looked at me and said, ‘Great, great audition. That’s what I am looking for,’” said Howard, 52.

Howard said Iñárritu asked him about his life and wanted to know if he had suffered hardships.

“My sense was there was so much involvement of emotion. Because there are some scenes that I didn’t say anything,” said Howard about his need to pull from his turbulent life story.

Howard grew up in an alcoholic family. He started drinking at a very young age and moved to Vancouver when he was 14. From there his drug and alcohol use got out of control and his life crashed. He spent most of 13 years living on Downtown Eastside streets.

“I had so much anger with my own immediate family and being a loner,” said Howard, who has now been sober for 29 years.

“It was a profound spiritual awakening that happened with me. One day I was, ‘I’m done, my body can’t take it anymore.’”

Howard bounced back and charged forward. He got his high school diploma and then his Substance Abuse Counselling certificate.

“My upbringing, I really had nobody there,” Howard said. “So I took it to myself to be responsible to be that mentor. To be that role model to our young people, people in general.”

Howard also decided that he needed to “shake things up a bit.”

He contacted a talent agent that had approached him at a native gathering. Soon after he was on his first movie job — a background actor on the X-Files.

As he got more work, he was upgraded to stunts. He says at one point he was the only First Nations stunt guy working in the city.

Howard said he didn’t have designs on acting until, during a film industry slowdown, he agreed to do a play.

“I got in there and then something just happened. I don’t know. All of a sudden I was just, ‘Wow,’” said Howard. “When that happened I just jumped right in.”

The role of Elk Dog in the \$135-million-US *The Revenant* is by far Howard’s biggest role to date. The film, based on a Michael Punke novel and set in South Dakota near the Missouri River in 1823, is the fictional re-telling of the story of frontiersman Hugh Glass (DiCaprio) and a team of fur trappers on an expedition that was cut short by a bloody

attack. Glass survives a subsequent grizzly mauling and sets out to enact revenge against those who wronged him.

Howard's Elk Dog is a stoic warrior who is searching for his daughter. He was proud to play such a strong warrior.

"When I look back there was nobody, no real native actors. They were all Italians," said Howard, remembering his childhood fascination with Westerns and his disappointment at the depiction of indigenous people.

The Revenant, shot over seven months in Kananaskis and Canmore with some filming in Squamish and Argentina, has been a tough shoot plagued with problems, on-set arguments, crew defection and harsh winter weather. It's to be released on Jan. 8

"Filming The Revenant was very, very difficult," said Howard, who spent four months on the movie filming in both Alberta and Argentina. "The days were really long and the temperatures were extremely cold. We never had any interior shoots. We were outside all of the time and that wears on you after a few weeks, and we all went for months. For me personally, I really got frustrated when they would change my dialogue after spending long hours the night before memorizing it, because the Arikara language is a very difficult one to learn. But if Alejandro came to me tomorrow and told me that he needed me to do it all over again for him, I would."

**Direct Link:**

<http://www.theprovince.com/first+nations+actor+from+vancouver+island+plays+role+alongside+dicaprio+revenant/11605460/story.html>

## **Indigenous actor takes turn as stuntman in 'The Revenant'**

**Conway Kootenay hopes Hollywood blockbuster leads to movie career**

CBC News Posted: Dec 21, 2015 1:23 PM MT Last Updated: Dec 21, 2015 1:23 PM MT



Conway Kootenay, from Alexander First Nation northwest of Edmonton, is a stuntman in The Revenant. (Provided)

For nearly six weeks, Conway Kootenay worked gruelling 16-hour days in sub-zero weather, all for six minutes of usable footage.

But those six minutes are the first moments of *The Revenant*, a Hollywood blockbuster starring Leonardo DiCaprio, set to open in just a few days.

The scene is shot seamlessly on one camera using only natural light, what's becoming a trademark style of director Alejandro González Iñárritu.

"He would shoot the last two hours of sunlight, so all day long we would rehearse our scenes," Kootenay told Edmonton AM radio host Mark Connolly, Monday.

"Being a stuntman is very physical, so we're doing this all day. He would come down in the last couple of hours and shoot the scene. It was like that for about a month and a half."

A couple of his colleagues narrowly escaped hypothermia while working on the water scenes, he said.

"You're there in that cold water, in the Bow River all day long."

Many of the extras in the film, shot near Calgary, are **indigenous people from across Alberta**.

Kootenay, who grew up at the Alexander First Nation west of Morinville, Alta., is relatively new to the acting business.

Three years ago, he started his acting career appearing as an extra on APTN's *Blackstone* television series.

Then he landed a lead role in a movie called *Fantasies of Flying*, due to be released in 2016.

"From there I got cast in *The Revenant* ... a blockbuster movie with a \$138 million budget. That's the business right?" he said laughing. "You never know what's going to happen."

"It's been a pretty cool roller-coaster ride for me."

Kootenay did a lot of fighting scenes in those gruelling six weeks, all part of a collective effort that shows up in the film, he said.

"It's ridiculous how amazing it looks," he said. "That's all the hard work that all of us did on the set paying off."

Kootenay says he has not seen the entire movie yet as stuntmen "don't get invited to the premiere.

"But we get paid pretty well. It's a good trade off. I'm cool with that."

Kootenay spent three weeks on set with Leonardo DiCaprio, exchanging small talk.

"He's a very professional gentleman. He'd do his thing, get in and get out."

Now Kootenay is looking forward to his career taking a leap.

"It looks really good on an actor's resumé to have something like this," he said. "It opens a lot of doors and I'm pretty excited about the future."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/indigenous-actor-takes-turn-as-stuntman-in-the-revenant-1.3375163>

## **Manitobah Mukluks aiming to support Aboriginal artists with proceeds from holiday sales**

By [Shannon Cuciz](#) Reporter/Anchor Global News, December 22, 2015 9:49 am



The Aboriginal-owned company features artwork from both well known and up and coming local artists.

WINNIPEG – A Winnipeg-based footwear company that started small almost 15 years ago is in high demand across Canada this holiday season.

Manitobah Mukluks were designed specifically for Canadian winters with a goal of making a difference in Aboriginal communities.

The Aboriginal-owned company features artwork from both well known and up and coming local artists.

“We are extremely busy now,” Manitobah Mukluks ecommerce manager Jaime Lepine said. “The company is always growing.”

The Storyboot Project showcases intricate handmade beading and sewing. The artists making the boots receive all of the proceeds from the holiday sales.

“Those are 100 percent authentic made by Aboriginals, a lot of them are from fly in communities and wouldn’t have the access to the public,” Lepine said.

The company aims to keep mukluk and moccasin knowledge alive in communities across the county, passing traditions down to younger generations.

“We also have a school where we teach the students the art of mukluk and moccasin making,” Manitobah Mukluks manager Sarah Brazauskas said.

**Direct Link:** <http://globalnews.ca/news/2415488/manitobah-mukluks-aiming-to-support-aboriginal-artists-with-proceeds-from-holiday-sales/>

## Aboriginal Business & Finance

### Ottawa lifts sanctions on First Nations that didn’t disclose finances

**TERRY PEDWELL**

OTTAWA — The Canadian Press

Published Friday, Dec. 18, 2015 2:52PM EST

Last updated Friday, Dec. 18, 2015 5:33PM EST

The federal Liberal government showed more solidarity with Canada’s First Nations on Friday as it lifted sanctions against indigenous communities that have not complied with a Conservative spending transparency law.

The decision was quickly condemned by the Opposition Tories and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, which warned that the move would leave First Nations people in the dark about how their elected leaders spend public money.

Indigenous Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett said her department will stop imposing punitive measures — such as withholding funds — on those communities not in compliance with the First Nations Financial Transparency Act.

Bennett, who described the changes as part of Ottawa’s new “nation-to-nation” relationship with indigenous peoples, also said she’s suspending court actions against those First Nations not complying with the law.

“Transparency and accountability are paramount to any government, whether it is municipal, provincial, federal or First Nation,” she said in a statement.

“We will work in full partnership with First Nations leadership and organizations on the way forward to improve accountability and transparency. This cannot be achieved without the engagement of First Nations and its members.”

Under the Act, First Nations are required to publicly disclose audited financial statements and information about the salaries and expenses of chiefs and councillors.

Those failing to do so by July 29 of last year faced escalating consequences ranging from public shaming to court action.

One community, the Onion Lake Cree Nation on the Alberta-Saskatchewan border, took the government to court, unsuccessfully trying to convince the Conservatives to talk with First Nations about their finances.

Bennett said she’s hopeful that lifting sanctions will open the door to talks with indigenous communities and help both levels of government to work together.

“These initial steps will enable us to engage in discussions on transparency and accountability that are based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership and that build towards a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples.”

Aaron Wudrick, the CTF’s director, said the move makes no sense.

“A law without consequence for non-compliance is a toothless law,” he said. “As such, soon many First Nations people across the country will again be in the dark as to how their elected leaders spend public dollars.”

Wudrick noted that the vast majority of First Nations were in compliance with the law both last year and in fiscal 2014-15.

“Suspending enforcement of this law is wrong, and completely undermines the very principles this government claims to be advancing.”

Not surprisingly, the Conservatives were also critical, accusing the Liberal government of gutting a federal law without going through proper parliamentary channels.

“For all practical purposes, this is a repeal of the act, being carried out without actually bothering to give members of Parliament any chance to debate it,” said indigenous affairs critic Cathy McLeod.

“It is ironic that a law about transparency is being gutted in such a non-transparent way.”

Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde welcomed what he called a “new approach,” predicting it would result in “real accountability by all parties.”

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-lifts-sanctions-on-first-nations-that-didnt-disclose-finances/article27854481/>

## First Nations group looking to buy Manitoba rail line and port



File image of trains in Manitoba

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The Canadian Press  
Published Friday, December 18, 2015 6:18PM EST

WINNIPEG -- A troubled rail line and port in northern Manitoba may be sold to a group of First Nations communities in the area.

Denver-based OmniTrax says it has accepted a letter of intent from the group over the sale of the Port of Churchill and the Hudson Bay rail line.

The company says there's a 45-day period of due diligence before a sale can be completed, and the federal and provincial governments will be asked to support the group buying the assets.

OmniTrax took over the rail line and port in 1997.

Churchill is Canada's only deep-water northern port and relies heavily on grain shipments from western farmers.

Those grain shipments were less than half the normal 500,000 tonnes this year, which prompted OmniTrax to look for a new owner.

Earlier this month, the Manitoba government said it was looking for federal help to ensure the continued operation of the northern line. Manitoba Transportation Minister Steve Ashton met with federal counterpart Marc Garneau in Ottawa.

The line is the only land link to Churchill and three other communities from the south.

Omnitrax Canada president Merv Tweed indicated that service could be discontinued if no new buyer were found. He also suggested governments could have the railway operate as a utility, presumably with regulation of rates and some form of subsidy in poor years.

Ashton suggested the long-term survival of the port and railway could depend on expanding port storage facilities to handle potash and other goods.

The northern rail line, which crosses hundreds of kilometres of bog and permafrost, has been plagued by derailments that have intermittently forced the suspension of both freight and passenger services.

OmniTrax had thought of shipping crude oil along the railway, but backed off the plan last year. The proposal was opposed by aboriginal groups, environmentalists and the government of Manitoba.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.ctvnews.ca/business/first-nations-group-looking-to-buy-manitoba-rail-line-and-port-1.2706631>

## **PM asked to direct Canada Revenue Agency to forgive aboriginal women's back taxes**

Native Leasing Services wants Justin Trudeau to ask the CRA to expedite its request for tax relief on behalf of nearly 4,000 former employees.



The Canada Revenue Agency says Ramona Dunn, 53, owes nearly \$94,000 in unpaid taxes, penalties and interest. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is being asked to direct the CRA to forgive the debt and that of other aboriginal women who believed the Indian Act exempted them from paying personal income taxes.

**By: Joanna Smith** Ottawa Bureau reporter, Published on Thu Dec 17 2015

OTTAWA—Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is being asked to direct the [Canada Revenue Agency](#) to forgive a group of mostly low-income aboriginal women who believed the Indian Act exempted them from paying personal income taxes.

[Native Leasing Services](#), an employee outsourcing company based at Six Nations of the Grand River is seeking a remission order on behalf of 3,916 former employees who lost a long-running legal dispute to be exempt from paying income taxes because their employer is located on a reserve.

Ljuba Irwin, the CEO of O.I. Group of Companies that includes Native Leasing Services, faxed a letter to Trudeau on Thursday morning asking him to intervene and expedite the remission order.

“You can appreciate that, because of the length of time it has taken to reach finality on this matter, most of these affected individuals of modest means will not ever be able to pay the taxes, interest and penalties back, and the aggressive collection approach of the CRA is only causing unnecessary distress and suffering,” Irwin wrote in her letter. One of those women is Ramona Dunn, 53, who the Canada Revenue Agency says owes nearly \$94,000 in unpaid taxes, penalties and interest for the time she worked as a registered nurse and diabetes educator at [Anishnawbe Health Toronto](#).

The PMO would not comment on the letter.

“It is an on-going file with Revenue Canada, it would be inappropriate for us to comment on it,” Trudeau spokeswoman Andrée-Lyne Hallé wrote in an email.

Philippe Brideau, a spokesman for the Canada Revenue Agency, said he could not discuss specific cases due to privacy.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/12/17/pm-asked-to-direct-canada-revenue-agency-to-forgive-aboriginal-womens-back-taxes.html>

## **MKO pleased Liberals reinstating funds frozen under First Nations Financial Transparency Act**

**Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak says it's willing to work with Liberal government on issue**

[CBC News](#) Posted: Dec 18, 2015 5:41 PM CT Last Updated: Dec 18, 2015 5:41 PM CT



Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak says she welcomes the Liberal government's decision to reinstate funds that were frozen under the controversial First Nations Financial Transparency Act. (CBC News)

The federal Liberal government's move to reinstate funds that were frozen under the controversial First Nations Financial Transparency Act is applauded by the group representing bands in northern Manitoba.

Indigenous Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett announced on Friday that the government will suspend court actions against First Nations that have not complied with the act.

As well, it's halting compliance measures that required bands to post detailed financial information online.

Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, an organization representing most First Nations in the province's north, said she welcomes Bennett's decision.

"I think Dr. Carolyn Bennett and the government's approach, if they're going at it at a nation-to-nation basis, then it will be much more collaborative, and we're willing to work with her government on this and see how we can make it work on both sides of the issue," she told CBC News.

The First Nations Financial Transparency Act, which was brought in by the previous Conservative government, required 581 bands across Canada to release their financial information or have their government funding cease.

"We did not support the previous government's action on implementing the First Nation Financial Transparency Act. I think that was the wrong approach," North Wilson said.

Aboriginal leaders have called the legislation prejudicial because it required the reporting of non-taxpayer-supported streams of income.

First Nations claim that information is already provided to government, and that publicizing it violates treaties as well as protections to privacy under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

"It was working against First Nations," North Wilson said.

"Instead of providing more resources to carry out the demands of the act, they just asked for more information without providing any extra resources, but also started to look at other own-source revenues that First Nations had that didn't really need to be out in public record because it would hinder any competitiveness in business. So it went too far."

North Wilson said a lot of First Nations are already transparent with their members, and the previous government's approach was not done in collaboration with First Nations.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/mko-pleased-liberals-reinstating-funds-frozen-under-first-nations-financial-transparency-act-1.3372789>

## **The Liberals reversal on First Nations Transparency Act a mistake according to CTF**

630 CHED

December 20, 2015 11:08 am



The Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF) is outraged at the federal government for their announcement on Friday to halt compliance measures for the First Nations Transparency Act.

The Act was brought in by the previous government, requiring 581 bands across Canada to release their financial information or have their government funding cease.

Aaron Wudrick, the Federal Director for the CTF tells the Alberta Morning News why he feels suspending these actions against First Nations is a bad idea.

“This law was working, this law was very effective, the vast majority of bands were complying and I might add the vast majority of them had no irregularities so anyone that’s claiming this an an attempt to make all First Nations look bad is simply wrong since with the vast majority there are absolutely no issues whatsoever” says Wudrick.

As of Friday 38 First Nations had not had a completed set of documents published online. 43 First Nations were waiting for the Liberal government to release more than \$12 million in funding which had been held back by the Conservatives.

Aboriginal leaders have said the legislation was prejudice because it required reporting of non-taxpayer streams of income.

First Nations have also claimed that their financial information is already provided to government and that making it public would violate treaties along with protections to privacy under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Indigenous Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett says she'll work with Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould to review laws to ensure the Crown is "fully executing" its obligations

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cknw.com/syn/98/97675/the-liberals-reversal-on-first-nations-transparency-act-a-mistake-according-to-ctf>

## **Kelly McParland: Ottawa pleads openness while reducing First Nations transparency**

Kelly McParland | December 21, 2015 12:09 PM ET

The First Nations Financial Transparency Act is one of those measures that shows how little understanding there is between the country's First Nations communities, and the vast majority of Canadians who aren't aboriginals.

The goal of the act, brought in by the Conservatives, was to improve transparency in how the aboriginal communities spend federal funding. Ottawa transfers about \$8 billion a year to First Nations, yet Canadians are well aware that life in many native communities remains closer to Third World standards than the prosperity enjoyed by most of the country. The transparency act was one means of tracking where the money goes and why it appears to achieve so little.

Many bands objected. They argue that they already deliver comprehensive financial reports to Ottawa, and piling more red tape on existing bureaucracy only adds further strain to limited resources, forcing bands to spend time on repetitive administration duties rather than practical concerns. They say the government already has plenty of ways to monitor spending, that most bands fully comply with requirements, and there were already laws to deal with those that don't. Band members also dislike being portrayed as irresponsible children who need Ottawa to make sure they behave like adults, which is a long-standing grievance with Ottawa's paternalistic ways.

Still, the law seemed to produce results. Band members for the first time found out just how much their leaders were paying themselves, and in some cases it was a shock. The 80 or so members of the Kwikwetlem First Nation said they knew nothing of their chief's \$914,000 income. A Manitoba chief who ran a reserve of 40 people earned the equivalent of \$185,000. The chief of the 226-member Scugog Island First Nation earned an off-reserve equivalent of \$159,000 in 2013. Chief Sidney Peters of the Glooscap First Nation

made the real-world equivalent of \$187,000 for overseeing a band of 75 people. In numerous cases, band leaders were found to earn substantially more than the mayors of much larger nearby non-native communities.

The disparity seemed egregious, but native leaders said that, too, just shows how little people understand their communities. Many bands operate companies that compete in the free market on behalf of band members and have commercial information they need to keep confidential. Band leaders do double- or triple-duty, taking on development and managerial roles for which larger communities have more resources. They insist they have no problem with transparency, but dislike having new rules imposed on them without consultation by a department as notoriously dysfunctional as Aboriginal Affairs.

On Friday, the new Liberal minister, Carolyn Bennett, revealed she would quit enforcing the act and release all the money held back from bands that hadn't complied. Curiously, this was done in the name of "transparency."

"Transparency and accountability are paramount to any government, whether it is municipal, provincial, federal or First Nation," Bennett said, pledging to "work in full partnership with First Nations leadership and organizations on the way forward to improve accountability and transparency."

Respect works both ways. Doing right doesn't mean always saying yes to demands. It's no secret that Justin Trudeau's government has made it a top priority to address aboriginal issues. Bennett's declaration suggests a curious approach, however: first, reduce transparency. Then open talks on transparency. In the first year of the act, 98% of bands were able to comply. The figure dropped sharply this year, perhaps because band leaders were hoping the Tory government would fall and they'd be freed of the need. Which is exactly what has happened, suggesting that First Nations opposition resulted not from an inability to meet Ottawa's demands, but a disinclination to do so.

Would it not have made sense to continue enforcing the act until First Nations managed to come up with a better alternative? In complying with the natives' demand before talks even begin, Bennett has removed any incentive they might have for making the discussions a success. Since she became minister, Bennett has shown a propensity to prejudge issues: in announcing an inquiry into missing and murdered women, she declared that the substantial body of information already available wouldn't do, because it didn't account for "colonization." That is, it didn't fix the blame on her preferred target.

In her statement Friday, Bennett emphasized repeatedly that the Liberals see their relations with natives to be on a "nation to nation" level. That would appear to presume one nation cannot impose its will on another nation. If that's the case, Canadians could begin to wonder why we're sending billions of dollars a year to 581 autonomous nations, and what Ottawa plans to do if its many talks and discussions don't lead to results that improve the lot of aboriginals while ensuring the interests of those Canadians who provide the funding are being equally protected.

Respect works both ways. Doing right doesn't mean always saying yes to demands. It would be nice if the Liberals would give some hint they understand that Canadians expect results, not just discussions, and that they recognize they will be judged on that.

**Direct Link:** <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/kelly-mcparland-ottawa-pleads-openness-while-reducing-first-nations-transparency>

## **First Nations café first of its kind**

### **Traditional ingredients used in most dishes**

By: Murray McNeill

Posted: **12/21/2015 3:00 AM**

An aboriginal-owned café that bills itself as the first of its kind in Manitoba is the latest new business to open in the city's West End.

The Feast Café & Bistro opened its doors Dec. 10 in the former Ellice Cafe and Theatre building at the corner of Ellice Avenue and Sherbrook Street.

The owner/operator -- Christa Bruneau-Guenther -- originally hoped to open the eatery last summer. But renovation and remedial work in the building took longer than expected.

Bruneau-Guenther is one of four aboriginal investors -- Jim Compton, Jeremy Torrie and Winnipeg-raised actor Adam Beach are the others -- who bought the building at 585 and 587 Ellice from New Life Ministries in 2014 and invested \$100,000 into renovations and upgrades.

The improvements included redeveloping the basement, upgrading the plumbing and installing a new roof. The theatre side of the building, which received \$85,000 in building and equipment upgrades, reopened late last year and houses the Bandwidth Theatre and the Adam Beach Film Institute.

Bruneau-Guenther admitted the timing of the café's opening wasn't ideal, given last week's big snowstorm and the fact the nearby University of Winnipeg is on its annual Christmas break.

"But it's better than waiting until next spring!"

She describes the Feast Café & Bistro as Manitoba's first licensed café and bistro serving dishes infused with locally sourced First Nations ingredients.

She said most dishes on the menu include from one to three traditional First Nations ingredients. For example, the house salad includes cranberries, sunflower seeds and wild rice; while the bison chili includes corn, bison meat and beans.

Other dishes on the menu include bison burgers, bison ribs, bannock pizzas, blueberry muffins and Indian tacos. Bruneau-Guenther noted the tacos, burgers and sandwiches on the menu are made with bannock. And there are plans to offer specials such as buffalo lasagna and elk stroganoff.

The executive director of the West End Business Improvement Zone said the Feast Café & Bistro is a welcome addition to the neighbourhood.

"We don't have anything like that here, and I don't think there is anything like that anywhere else in the city," said Gloria Cardwell-Hoeppner. "I think they're going to do extremely well."

An added bonus is the café is open for breakfast -- the winter hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. from Monday to Thursday, and 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Cardwell-Hoeppner said there are only a couple of other restaurants in the West End that open early.

"So them being open for breakfast is extremely welcome. Now we've just got to get the word out... "

Cardwell-Hoeppner said 2015 has been a good year for the West End, with 49 new businesses opening, including at least two this month. In addition to the Feast Café & Bistro, a new Meineke Car Care Centres franchise -- the first in the province -- opened Dec. 1 at 255 Burnell St. near Portage Avenue.

The owner of that business is Ghassan Khalil, who immigrated to Canada 24 years ago from Saudi Arabia. His new six-bay service centre has five full-time employees.

Bruneau-Guenther said the lunch period was the busiest time of the day in the first week-and-a-half her café was open. The breakfast period has been slower than she would like, but she thinks that will improve as more area residents and workers become aware it's open.

Her customers so far have been a mix of people from the neighbourhood and people from other parts of the city. Last weekend was the first time the café has been open on Friday evening and Saturday, so she's hoping the extended hours will help attract more customers from outside the neighbourhood.

"We're hoping to draw people from all over the city," she added.

In addition to serving meals on-site, the Feast has also been offering catering services for local festivals and events since last summer. Within the next two months it also hopes to open a small retail area that will sell baked goods -- things such as bannock, muffins, desserts and maybe some breads.

Further down the road, Bruneau-Guenther hopes to also begin offering cooking classes out of the building.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/business/first-nations-cafe-first-of-its-kind-363106411.html>

## **Financial transparency? No, it's not a trick to subvert native governments**

The Globe and Mail

Published Sunday, Dec. 20, 2015 6:30PM EST

Last updated Sunday, Dec. 20, 2015 6:30PM EST

Reconciliation, by all means; truth, under advisement: On Friday, Carolyn Bennett, the Minister of Indigenous Affairs, announced that she was suspending proceedings under the First Nations Financial Transparency Act, directing her department to “cease all discretionary compliance measures.” What’s more, money withheld because some band councils have not complied with the FNFTA will be released. This is not the ideal outcome.

The FNFTA, enacted under the Conservative government, forced First Nations governments to make their expenditures and financial affairs public. On a number of reserves, band members learned some surprising facts about the management and finances of their communities, including the high remuneration of some chiefs and band councillors. Most First Nations followed the law and agreed to be transparent, but a few refused to comply, with the previous government trying to enforce the law in court.

Back when Justin Trudeau was the leader of the third party, he advocated the outright repeal of the FNFTA, which he proposed to replace with something “respectful.” Still, the Liberal Party platform didn’t actually mention this in its section on “A renewed relationship with Indigenous Peoples.”

Ms. Bennett said her decision to let the few First Nations violating the law continue to do so, without penalty, is “in keeping with our commitment to a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship.”

A few First Nations leaders have objected to the breadth of the transparency required by the FNFTA, arguing that some indigenous communities that own substantial businesses and significant natural resources need confidentiality in commercial dealings.

It’s a slippery, disturbing logic. The FNFTA isn’t primarily about holding First Nations governments accountable to Ottawa. It’s about disclosure and accountability to their own communities. The objection of these non-compliant councils is tantamount to saying that citizens have no right to be kept informed about the doings of their own governments. But how can you self-govern when you don’t know what your government is up to?

One of the positive stories of the 2015 election is how indigenous voters appear to have turned out in record numbers. It would be a sad setback if, even as native Canadians jumped into federal politics, First Nations governments themselves became more closed.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/editorials/financial-transparency-is-not-just-a-trick-to-subvert-indigenous-governments/article27864655/>

## Put teeth back into First Nations Financial Transparency Act: Editorial

In removing penalties for those who don't fulfil their obligations under the First Nations Financial Transparency Act, Indigenous Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett is not doing any favours for band members.



Indigenous Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett speaks during Question Period in the House of Commons on Parliament Hill in Ottawa earlier this month.

Published on Mon Dec 21 2015

On the face of it, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett gets the need for openness in governance. "Transparency and accountability are paramount to any government, whether it is municipal, provincial, federal or First Nation," she declared last week.

And who would disagree?

Unfortunately, Bennett delivered her ringing statement of principle even as she gutted the First Nations Financial Transparency Act of all penalties that ensure band councils are held accountable to their membership, taxpayers, and Ottawa for how billions in federal funding are spent.

She did so by reinstating funding that had been withheld against First Nations that refused to comply with the act, and by suspending court action against them. In doing so she risks rendering the act toothless.

That's wrong. While it may win favour among native leaders, including the Assembly of First Nations, it was done at the expense of band members.

The transparency act requires First Nations to publicly disclose their spending, including what chiefs and councillors get by way of pay and expenses. It has shed welcome light since the 2013-2014 fiscal year, when it was first implemented.

In some cases it drew attention to questionable salaries and economic practices.

The small Shuswap First Nation in British Columbia, for example, dumped longtime chief Paul Sam after learning he was earning more than \$200,000 tax free a year for presiding over 87 members.

As well, the tiny Kwikwetlem First Nation in B.C. learned their chief, Ron Giesbrecht, was paid \$914,219 for governing 82 members, including \$800,000 as an “economic development” bonus.

But for the most part the First Nations Financial Transparency Act corrected the unfair public perception that most aboriginal leaders are highly overpaid. They aren’t.

Using public figures, the Star’s Joanna Smith found that in the 2013-2014 fiscal year the chiefs earned a fairly modest \$60,000 in median salary and honoraria. Eight took no remuneration, 34 got less than \$10,000 and 41 got between \$10,000 and \$20,000.

That’s a far cry from the outrageous salaries some First Nations chiefs used to be paid, which spurred calls for more transparency.

Today, most First Nations bands comply with the law. As of Dec. 17, only 38 of 581 bands had not complied for the 2014-2015 fiscal year. That high level of compliance suggests the law was working.

Bennett says the steps she took will “enable us to engage in discussions on transparency and accountability that are based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.” That sounds good, in principle.

But how will the rights of band members to see fiscal statements and salaries be guaranteed, going forward? How this will result in “real accountability by all parties,” in the words of Assembly of First Nations national chief Perry Bellegarde? These are questions Bennett needs to answer. Band members shouldn’t be left in the dark.

The Liberals came to power promising more open, transparent governance. That should go for Ottawa and First Nations alike. No exceptions. This risks being a backward step.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorials/2015/12/21/put-teeth-back-into-first-nations-financial-transparency-act-editorial.html>

## **Aboriginal Community Development**

### **Nearly half of First Nations have 'little to no fire protection': report**

Chinta Puxley, The Associated Press  
Published Monday, December 21, 2015 7:01AM EST

WINNIPEG -- An internal federal government report says almost half the First Nations across Canada have "little to no fire protection" and rely too heavily on poorly trained volunteer firefighters who can't do the job.

The 2011 report examining insurance coverage for First Nations communities, obtained by The Canadian Press through Access to Information legislation, found only 56 per cent of First Nation sites across Canada have adequate fire protection -- most because they depend on a neighbouring municipality.

British Columbia and Manitoba had the highest percentage of First Nation sites with little to no fire protection while First Nations in Atlantic Canada had the most sites with adequate service.

"The number of fire-related deaths in First Nations is also a major concern," the consultant's report said. "The fire death rates in First Nations are substantially higher than those off reserve."

The report found that fire incidence rates for First Nations are 2.4 times higher than for the rest of Canada. First Nations residents are also 10 times more likely to die in a house fire.

The victims are often young children.

A two-year-old boy and an 18-month-old girl were carried by their father from a burning home this year on the Makwa Sahgaiehcan reserve in Saskatchewan. They were pronounced dead at the scene. The fire department from a neighbouring municipality didn't respond due to a funding dispute with the First Nation.

Two-month-old Errabella Harper died in a house fire on the St. Theresa Point First Nation in 2011. At the time, the community's fire truck was broken, with no fire hoses and no one knew where the keys were.

A second fire about two months later on the God's Lake Narrows First Nation killed Demus James and his two grandchildren. Neighbours tried unsuccessfully to douse the flames with buckets, wet towels and a low-pressure hose. An inquest into the deaths found the reserves were woefully unprepared.

Reserves rely too much on volunteers who aren't properly trained to protect homes that are dilapidated and not built to code, the government report found. There is a high attrition rate and volunteers don't "adequately serve the public interest," it added.

As the Liberal indigenous affairs critic, Carolyn Bennett called federal funding for fire protection services "appalling." Now indigenous affairs minister, Bennett said the report's findings are "not acceptable."

First Nations need better fire prevention tools and adequate housing, as well as the ability to fight fires when they break out, she said.

"We think there are far too many First Nations families living in homes that other Canadians wouldn't be subject to," Bennett said in an interview. "This is a goal for all of us and for all Canadians -- they don't think that First Nations people should be living in third-world conditions."

Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson, with Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, which represents northern First Nations, said the lack of fire protection provided to First Nations would never be tolerated in any other Canadian community.

"It's appalling," North Wilson said. "Are we second, third-class citizens?" First Nations have very little discretionary spending and fire protection has to go up against housing, education, water and sewer systems, she said. Deliberately under-funding basic priorities like fire protection is "racist," she said.

A spokesperson for the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada said the government takes issue with parts of its report. The report "does not provide a complete picture of fire protection coverage in First Nation communities today," said Michelle Perron, in an emailed statement.

A reserve can have more than one site, some of which may not have housing or infrastructure and "therefore no fire protection service," she said.

On Wasagamack First Nation, a remote northern Manitoba reserve, last week, a brand-new youth centre which hadn't even opened yet burned to the ground.

Chief Sharon Mason said the volunteer fire department was only able to keep the fire from destroying the adjacent community hall.

It was the best the department could do with an ancient fire truck that still bears the name of a town in the United States.

"We need a proper fire hall. We need a truck that actually works. We need supplies for our volunteers," she said, adding the reserve can't afford to lose any homes because it is already struggling with a chronic housing shortage.

"Fire safety is really critical."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/nearly-half-of-first-nations-have-little-to-no-fire-protection-report-1.2708417>

## Christmas meals are coming

[Jason Kerr](#), Published on December 21, 2015

Sheryl Kimbley and some volunteer helpers have just finished their last minute shopping, but unlike most Prince Albert residents, they aren't buying gifts.

Kimbley, the special events coordinator for the Prince Albert Grand Council, has just picked up all the food and fixings needed for a large-scale Christmas feast. It's part of an expanded PAGC program to provide two additional warm meals during the holiday season, and the first one is only a day away.

"I think we bought enough groceries for about 250 people," Kimbley says. "This will be kind of a first year indicator of how much is needed. We know it's probably a lot more than that, but this is the target we shot for in the first year."

For many years, the urban services department within the PAGC put on Christmas meals for local residents who had nowhere else to go. This year, the entire PAGC is helping organize two additional holiday meals on Dec. 23 and Jan. 1.

Kimbley says there is no such thing as too many warm meals during the Christmas season.

"We heard there are other dinners being hosted all over the place, but we figured it's the time of year when it's much appreciated by many people, to have all these hot meals," she explains. "We're just hoping to bring a little cheer on Dec. 23 and then again on Jan. 1."

Although the dinners are open to anyone, they're generally targeted towards low-income residents and their families. It's taken a lot of time and effort to set up these meals, but they've had great support from the community.

Two caterers in Prince Albert have agreed to cook and serve the meals free of charge, while the Prince Albert Indian Metis Friendship Centre has donated the use of their facility for the second meal. A few local musicians also came together over the weekend to help raise money for the cause.

Kimbley said getting such strong support has made her more proud of Prince Albert than ever before.

“I have nothing but great things to say at this time of the season, when all of these organizations step up and say; ‘let’s help those people who don’t have some of the same luxuries that some of us have, like a roof over our head and a hot meal.’”

The first PAGC Christmas meal runs from 1-4 p.m. on Wednesday at the Margo Fournier Centre. The second is on Jan. 1 at the Prince Albert Indian Metis Friendship Centre.

Anyone who wants to volunteer or donate to the cause can contact Kimbley at 306-980-8501.

### Season of giving

In addition to providing warm meals for the less fortunate, the Prince Albert Grand Council will also be accepting canned goods on behalf of the Prince Albert Food Bank.

Kimbley said food bank services are in high demand around the holidays, so it’s important for donors to keep the shelves well stocked.

“We forget about them after Christmas, so the more we can hand over to them, the better. I think they’d be appreciative as well.”

The PAGC will also be accepting monetary donations for the Christmas meal program.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.paherald.sk.ca/News/Local/2015-12-21/article-4383285/Christmas-meals-are-coming/1>

## 10-year-old First Nations girl earns black belt in taekwondo

**Aurora Lavallee first started the martial art at age 5**

[CBC News](#) Posted: Dec 21, 2015 4:33 PM CT Last Updated: Dec 21, 2015 8:51 PM CT



Aurora Lavallee stands in between her master Clint Norman and her father Ira Lavallee. (Submitted by Ira Lavallee)

Aurora Lavallee is a shy 10-year-old girl until she hits the taekwondo mat.

She earned her first-degree black belt over the weekend at St. Anne's Parish in Regina, making her one of the youngest First Nations girls to achieve this level in the martial art.

"I was really excited but really nervous," Aurora said.



She was tested on the skills she's been learning with the Regina South Zone Taekwon-Do Club for the past five years.

"That's quite young for any of our children," her master, Clint Norman, said. "Ten is probably the youngest that we would allow in our organization."

The hour and half exam involved breaking wooden boards, sparring, and doing taekwondo patterns. There was also a lengthy written test.

"She took it upon herself, without us as parents pushing her, to open up her manual and [to study] every other evening, voluntarily preparing herself for the test, " Aurora's father, Ira Lavallee, said.

Ira, who is Chief of the Piapot First Nation, signed his daughter up for taekwondo at a young age because he remembered the impact the sport made on his own life. He also has a black belt.

"Where I am today, I credit part of that to the lessons I learned through taekwondo," Ira said.

"Taekwondo encompasses a way of life and I guess it teaches us to respect each other. One of philosophies of taekwondo is, it's not just to beat people up, it's to protect and preserve and promote a better society."

The proud father explained that the martial art has helped Aurora gain more confidence, overcoming her shy nature.

Like her own father's dream, Aurora's goal is to make it to the world championship.

"I hope she continues to have interest in taekwondo so she can compete on behalf of all First Nations people and to someday teach and teach other First Nations people about taekowndo," Ira said.

"It's rare for a First Nations youth to achieve what she has and I just want to see her go as far as she can with it."

Lavallee will have to wait three years to test for her second degree black belt. She can't take the exam until she turns 13.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/first-nations-girl-earns-black-belt-taekwondo-1.3375425>

## Christmas candy-drop tradition may be coming to an end in Inuit community



Johnny May is pictured with his plane, the Pengo Pally.

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[Christina Commisso](#), CTVNews.ca Writer

Published Wednesday, December 23, 2015 1:32PM EST

In an Inuit community in Northern Quebec, a famed bush pilot has taken on a role similar to that of Santa Claus on Christmas Day.

Every Dec. 25, Johnny May flies his plane low over his hometown of Kuujuaq, Nunavik -- a village of 2,500 -- dropping presents and candy as he goes.

It's a tradition that started in 1965, and one that 70-year-old May has continued every year since.

"At the beginning I used to do it myself," May told CTVNews.ca. "Mind you the village was much, much smaller, so it didn't take a lot of candy."

The idea of the candy drop has its roots with the Hudson Bay Company, which would send candy to each of its trading outposts around the holidays. May's father, a manager at the George River outpost, would toss candy from a rooftop on Christmas morning.

"After I became a pilot, I thought, it would be kind of fun to try it from an airplane," May said. "It was a hit."

He said the candy drop was originally intended for children. "But now I think the kids are way outnumbered by adults," he said.

"They all try and run in the direction my flight path might be," he said. "It's a lot of fun to watch."

The presents have also changed over the decades.

The candy is now mixed in with winter parkas and toques that are purchased with donations raised by the town's recreation committee.

May is once again planning to fly his plane, the Pengo Pally, over the northern community this Dec. 25, and the 70-year-old says that this year could be his last.

"I made up my mind a few years ago that if I was fortunate to be in good health and do it for 50 years in a row, that I would make it my last candy drop," he said.

May said he is issued an exemption from Transport Canada to fly his plane low and drop items from the aircraft. But he said officials with the agency have indicated they will not issue an exemption to another pilot.

"So I assume my last candy drop will be the last one with a plane," May said.

He added that he has no doubt the candy drop will continue, but the presents may be dropped from a rooftop instead.

Transport Canada has not responded to CTVNews.ca's request for comment.

### **Canadian aviation museum honours Kuujjuaq tradition**

Whether 2015 marks the final year May takes up the Pengo Pally for the candy drop is not set in stone, as the pilot himself admits that his plans, "are subject to change."

But May's involvement in the Christmas candy drop isn't likely to be forgotten any time soon.

This year the Canadian Aviation and Space Museum published a children's storybook honouring the Christmas tradition called "[The Kuujjuaq Christmas Candy Drop](#)."



An illustration from the children's storybook, "The Kuujjuaq Christmas Candy Drop."

The candy drop is relatively unknown outside of Nunavik, which author Linda Brand said was one of the reasons behind publishing the book.

"(May) is a role model in the North who has a huge heart, and a huge sense of community... this is the Christmas tradition of giving and sharing," Brand said.

The museum partnered with Air Inuit to deliver more than 300 books to schools in Nunavik.

Brand hopes to get the book into every classroom across the Canadian Arctic in order to spread May's story. She said the museum is hoping to partner with Canadian businesses to help print additional copies of the book.

She said May is well-known in Kuujjuaq for the candy drop and through his day job where he responded to search and rescue situations with Medevac.

"Sometimes you have heroes in your community and you don't know until people from the outside tell you," Brand said.

May, however, doesn't consider himself a hero.

"No, no," he said. "Maybe for somebody like Linda from out of town. She thinks of people like myself as a hero. But when we all live together in town, I'm just another person."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/christmas-candy-drop-tradition-may-be-coming-to-an-end-in-inuit-community-1.2711992>

## **Aboriginal Crime, Justice & Law Enforcement**

# Flags raised over return of children to mother accused in slaying

DARCY HENTON, CALGARY HERALD

Published on: December 18, 2015 | Last Updated: December 18, 2015 10:38 AM MST



Baby Jay, 15-months-old, was slain at a residence on the Samson Cree Nation reserve in Alberta. A woman has been charged with second-degree murder

The slaying of a 15-month-old toddler in a First Nations community in central Alberta could have been prevented if social workers had not ignored “tons of red flags,” say caregivers close to the case.

They say social workers were repeatedly warned not to return Baby Jay and his five siblings to his biological parents out of concern for their safety and well-being.

Maskwacis RCMP have charged a 28-year-old woman in the Dec. 5 beating death of the little boy in a residence on the Samson Cree Nation, about 80 kilometres south of Edmonton.

CBC reported Florencine Leandra Potts appeared in court in Wetaskiwin Tuesday charged with the second-degree murder of her son. She was remanded in custody until January.

Alberta legislation still restricts the identification of children in care, their families and foster parents, but those close to the victim and his siblings are calling for answers.

Baby Jay and his five siblings were apprehended by the province for their own safety in August 2014, and placed in the care of three foster families, sources say. The children were returned over the objections of the foster parents Oct. 8, just days after their mother had a seventh child.

“Jay’s death could have been 100 per cent prevented if they would have just listened,” said the toddler’s foster mother. “I just want to see changes. I don’t want to see this ever happen to another little boy again.”

She said the “happy-go-lucky” child came back “screaming” with a broken leg after one visit to the home, while his six-year-old brother, also in her care, required hospital treatment for an asthma attack. She said the older child told her he huddled under a blanket one night, scared by gunshots.

“We said the boys are scared to go home, and no one listened to us,” she said. “It was just horrible.”

Another foster parent said the siblings he and his wife cared for were distressed about returning to the home of their biological parents where they slept three to a bed and sometimes went hungry.

He said he was concerned the children were being returned to the same unsafe environment from which they had been apprehended and worried that the biological parents had failed to take required programs to help them cope with addictions and teach them parental skills.

He said no one has advised him what has happened to the children now that the mother is in custody, but he and the other foster parents want to take them back at least for Christmas.

A spokeswoman for Alberta Human Services said Thursday the ministry can’t speak to the specifics of any case due to the privacy provisions of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act and it would also be inappropriate to comment because the matter is before the courts.

“The death of any child is tragic and our thoughts and prayers go out to his family, caregivers and friends during this difficult time,” spokeswoman Aileen Machell said in an email.

She noted the child and youth advocate is notified of all deaths and serious injuries of all children receiving services under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act.

“The advocate may choose to investigate any death and serious injury that is reported to him,” she said. “Government is committed to bringing in an independent oversight so that every child death and serious injury is properly investigated.”

Machell said the government is committed to improving the system to support the safety and well-being of children receiving child intervention services.



Baby Jay, 15-months-old, was slain at a residence on the Samson Cree Nation reserve in Alberta.

But a woman close to the victim said the government is not doing enough.

“There’s just something wrong,” she said. “This is happening way too often.”

She said child advocate Del Graff has repeatedly called for more support for kids in care, but no one seems to be listening to the children.

“They just become numbers,” she said. “These are kids. We’re just playing with their lives. Too often things go wrong.”

The foster mother said she is distraught with grief over the death of the child she raised from a baby.

“He was the easiest, happiest kid in the world,” she said. “We said if all kids were like Jay we would have had 30 of them. He was super cuddly. He loved to fall asleep in people’s laps.”

**Direct Link:** <http://calgaryherald.com/news/crime/flags-raised-over-return-of-children-to-mother-accused-in-slaying>

## **First Nations student deaths inquest adjourns until 2016**

**Testimony continues January 11**

By Jody Porter, CBC News Posted: Dec 18, 2015 7:00 AM ET Last Updated: Dec 18, 2015 7:00 AM ET



Ontario's provincial advocate for children, Irwin Elman , one of the formally recognized parties at the inquest was among those scouring the court house on the first day for more chairs to pack into the tiny courtroom for family members. (CBC/Jody Porter)

The inquest into deaths of seven First Nations students in Thunder Bay, Ont. wrapped up nearly three months of testimony this week, but at least one parent says he is still smarting from the way it began in October.

The **room assigned for the first day of the inquest was one of the smallest in Thunder Bay's recently built courthouse** with only 10 seats available for family members of the seven students, all of whom have waited years and travelled hundreds of kilometres for the launch of the long-awaited hearings.

Court officials made a much larger courtroom available the following day, but Christian Morriseau said the initial insult still hurts.

"It's painful, very painful to see that happen," Morriseau said after testifying this week about the death of his son Kyle.

The inquest has so far heard testimony about the deaths of six of seven of the students — Jethro Anderson, Paul Panacheese, Robyn Harper, Reggie Bushie, Curran Strang and Kyle Morriseau. All of the students who died are from remote First Nations and were attending high school in Thunder Bay.

Evidence about Kyle's death was supposed to conclude this week, but will continue into the new year after the final police witness was dismissed on Thursday.



Kyle Morriseau was 17 years old when he died in Thunder Bay while attending high school in 2009. (CBC)

There are concerns about the police response to Kyle's disappearance in October 2009.

The inquest heard that within days of the 17-year-old being reported missing, First Nations leaders identified the person who was last seen with Kyle and relayed the information to police.

Police did not interview that person until more than a week later, after Kyle's body had been found in the McIntyre River.

## **'Lack of fulsome investigation'**

"There was a lack of a fulsome investigation," said Chantelle Bryson, lawyer for the provincial advocate for children and youth. "Therefore we'll never know how Kyle ended up in the water."

Lawyers representing several parties at the inquest attempted to determine which officer was in charge of various aspects of the investigation, but could not.

"Police witnesses are being asked again and again what happened, and the witness says, 'I don't know, I wasn't the one who followed up,'" said Karen Shea, counsel for the coroner.

After consulting with the lawyers for all parties, presiding coroner Dr. David Eden decided to adjourn the inquest while Thunder Bay police produce a document showing the "task list" for the Morriseau case.

Eden thanked the five jurors for their dedication, praising them for paying close attention and asking "insightful questions" during the first half of the inquest.

He also reminded them not to discuss the inquest with anyone except fellow jurors and not to read any media reports about it.

When the inquest resumes in the new year, jurors will hear evidence about the death of Jordan Wabasse. The 15-year-old from Webequie First Nation died in 2011.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/first-nations-student-deaths-inquest-adjourns-until-2016-1.3370611>

## **Inquest Into Seven Aboriginal Student Deaths in Thunder Bay Adjourns for Year**

Cara McKenna

12/22/15

After three months of testimony, an inquest into the deaths of seven indigenous youths in Thunder Bay while they were attending high school far from their remote reserves has adjourned until January 11, according to [CBC News](#).

Racism against indigenous youth in Thunder Bay has been a recurring topic during the inquest into the deaths of seven First Nations high school students, ages 15 to 21, between 2000 and 2011. They died while attending high school in the northwestern Ontario city, with five of them found in waterways.

Over the last several weeks of the inquest, which began in early October, witnesses included former students, the victims' friends and family members, police and medical experts. A number of people have brought up the ongoing issue of racism in Thunder Bay, and it is an old one, although various programs have tried to address it.

Alexis Turtle, who went to school with 15-year-old Reggie Bushie before he was found dead in a river in 2007, testified remotely in November from her home in Pikangikum First Nation. She told the inquest that she felt nervous and scared when she left her home community to go to high school Thunder Bay at age 16. She said she and a friend were once waiting at a bus stop when objects were thrown at them from a passing car.

Several other former students described similar experiences. Skye Kakekagumick, who came to Thunder Bay from Keewaywin First Nation when she was 15, told the inquest panel that she was called a "stupid savage" and had food thrown at her, [CBC News](#) reported.

"It's very scary," Kakekagumick said. "To them, we are just savages. They think it's funny."

Kakekagumick said that when she first came to the city, police caught her drinking with friends, and a male officer grabbed her by the hair and slammed her head into a police cruiser, according to CBC. Officers also taunted her with cartoon drawings of native people, the girl said, and added that she and other students turned to alcohol to cope with racism and loneliness.

It has been revealed in the inquest that several of the teens were drinking before they died.

Bushie's aunt, who took him in when he was a baby, broke into tears when she told the inquest that she "didn't want to let him go" to Thunder Bay for Grade 9. She said she knew the teen was experimenting with alcohol and was concerned about what might happen with his drinking.

"We loved him, and we really cared for him, and we did not want him to leave," she said.

Their home community of Poplar Hill First Nation, with a population of about 500, only offers schooling up to Grade 8. She and Bushie's mother, Rhoda, both testified that they didn't recall hearing from police when the teen went missing or when he died.

Dora Morris—the aunt of Jethro Anderson, whose body was found in a river in 2000, when he was 15—previously testified that when she reported her nephew missing, an officer told her he was “just out there partying like any native kid.”

Police waited six days to investigate his death, CBC reported. The inquest heard that police announced no foul play was suspected in the death before an autopsy was complete. Although they had received a tip that Anderson had been murdered, they deemed it not credible and did not investigate.

The goal of the inquest is to find ways to prevent further deaths of students who come to the city from remote communities, and it is expected to continue into March and hear a total of about 200 witness testimonies.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/12/22/inquest-seven-aboriginal-student-deaths-thunder-bay-adjourns-year-162846>

## Repealing spanking law affects more than just First Nations: experts

Legal experts say the move would also affect many immigrant and minority parents caught in a legal haze when it comes to child-rearing.



Section 43 of the Criminal Code currently gives parents and teachers a legal defence when they physically discipline children, which is most often understood as legalizing spanking.

**By:** The Canadian Press, Published on Tue Dec 22 2015

OTTAWA—Repealing a provision of the Criminal Code that [shields parents from facing assault charges for hitting their children](#) would affect more than just First Nations communities.

Legal experts say it would also affect many immigrant and minority parents caught in a legal haze when it comes to child-rearing.

Section 43 of the Criminal Code gives parents and teachers a legal defence when they physically discipline children, which is most often understood as legalizing spanking.

Removing the section was one of the 94 recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that examined the legacy of Canada's residential schools. The Liberals have [committed to implementing all of the recommendations](#) but experts say the section needs to be amended, not repealed outright, to continue to provide some degree of legal protection to parents.

The Canadian Bar Association and the Canadian Medical Association Journal have in the past lobbied for its repeal, but private member's bills to remove it from the Criminal Code have repeatedly failed to pass the Senate and House of Commons.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/12/22/repealing-spanking-law-affects-more-than-just-first-nations-experts.html>

## Wildrose seeks probe into slaying of toddler who had been in provincial care

DARCY HENTON, CALGARY HERALD

More from Darcy Henton, Calgary Herald

Published on: December 23, 2015 | Last Updated: December 23, 2015 5:57 AM MST



**Baby Jay, 15 months old, was slain at a residence on the Samson Cree Nation reserve in Alberta. A woman has been charged with second-degree murder.**

The Wildrose Party has called on the province's child and youth advocate to investigate the circumstances that led to the slaying of a 15-month-old toddler in a central Alberta First Nations community earlier this month.

The official Opposition's Human Services critic has asked Del Graff to conduct an investigation in the death of Baby Jay, who was beaten to death Dec. 5 after being returned to his biological parents against the advice of his foster parents.

The toddler and five older siblings had been apprehended by child care officials and placed in three temporary foster homes for their own safety.

Florencine Leandra Potts appeared in court in Wetaskiwin Dec. 15 charged with the second-degree murder of her son. She was remanded in custody until January.

"This heartbreaking event has raised concerns for many about aspects of the child intervention system and the policies and practices that may have contributed to it," Airdrie MLA Angela Pitt says in a letter to Graff that was provided to reporters. "We have received information that this particular case was severely mishandled, and we are concerned that policy choices are being put ahead of the safety of children."

She advised Graff that she believes a full investigation may identify problems that could be corrected to save lives of other children in the provincial child care system.

"Foster parents clearly stated to the social workers that these children were not safe with their mother and their pleas were ignored," Pitt said in an interview. "That's just not right. These are kids. We're supposed to protect them."

Graff could not be reached for comment.

Human Services officials say they can't comment on individual cases but they are striving to improve the child care system.

The toddler's foster parents told the Herald there were a number of red flags that should have prompted social workers to reconsider the decision to send the children home.

A woman close to the toddler said the children should have been in their kinship homes in the Maskwacis community or left with their foster families.

"There should have been supports in place, there should have been home checks, the voices of the oldest children should have been listened to, the voices of the foster families should have been listened to, the recommendation of a highly respected pediatrician should have been listened to," she said. "All these 'should haves' are for naught — a child is dead."

She said something has to change.

"Something is wrong with this system that is supposed to ensure every little person has a safe place," she said. "Something is wrong with this system that ignores the warning signals and won't admit to (its) failings."

Pitt said she is concerned the deaths of children in care are too common and the province should consider conducting a full-scale inquiry into the child welfare system to find ways to prevent them.

A Calgary Herald-Edmonton Journal investigation last year found the provincial child care system plagued with flaws and veiled in secrecy. It revealed a haphazard death review process, scores of fatality inquiry recommendations that weren't implemented and a shocking over-representation of aboriginal children in care.

**Direct Link:** <http://calgaryherald.com/news/politics/wildrose-seeks-probe-into-slaying-of-toddler-who-was-in-provincial-care>

## **Trevor Hancock: Peace on Earth — and especially at home**

TIMES COLONIST

DECEMBER 23, 2015 12:06 AM

Christmas is supposed to be a time of peace — “Peace on Earth and goodwill to all mankind.” Indeed, 101 years ago, in the early days of the First World War, peace did break out briefly in the famous Christmas Truce. Sadly, it did not last, and the nations soon returned to resolving their differences through violence.

But the tendency to resort to violence is not just restricted to war; it occurs throughout society. Indeed, in a 2014 report, the World Health Organization estimated almost half a million people died from homicide in 2012 and reported that: “Five times as many people die from homicide each year as from war-related injury.”

The WHO has identified a variety of forms of violence other than war, “including child abuse and neglect, youth violence, intimate-partner violence, sexual violence, elder abuse, self-directed violence and collective violence.” So in this season of peace, we need to think about the prevention of all forms of violence; we need peace domestically as well as internationally.

But deaths are themselves only a small part of the overall picture of violence; there are many more who are injured. In Canada, there were 516 homicides and 617 cases of attempted murder in 2014, but 212,923 assaults reported to police, as well as 20,735 sexual assaults. Similarly, a 2013 report from Statistics Canada on spousal violence noted that there were 65 spousal homicides in Canada in 2009 but “46,918 incidents of spousal violence were reported to police.”

However, the real picture is worse, as many assaults go unreported. The 2013 report also stated: “In 2009, 335,697 Canadians were victims of spousal-violence incidents.” Of these, almost two-thirds were common assault, which, it notes, is rated as of low severity.

On top of this are the impacts of violence on mental and social well-being. The WHO notes that episodes of domestic violence such as child maltreatment, intimate-partner

violence and sexual violence “contribute significantly to depression, sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies, while also increasing the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviours, such as smoking and the harmful use of alcohol and drugs.”

All this comes at a massive economic cost. The 2013 Statistics Canada report gave overall costs in 2009 of \$7.4 billion for spousal violence alone. Of these costs, almost 75 per cent are intangible, which “include emotional costs to victims and the family.” Of the remaining \$1.7 billion of tangible costs, most (64 per cent) was paid by the state, mainly for justice-system and health-care costs. And this is only for spousal assault.

We also need to keep in mind that men make up a significant proportion of victims of violence. Globally, WHO reports that men are the victims in four-fifths of homicides. A 2008 report on police-reported violent crime in Canada noted that “the rate of violent victimization for female and male victims was comparable.” However, the type of violence they experience is different: “Males, for example, are more likely to be the victims of physical assault and homicide, while sexual-assault victims are overwhelmingly female.”

In Canada, we also need to recognize that aboriginal people are more often both the victims and the perpetrators of violent crime. Just last month, Statistics Canada reported: “In 2014, aboriginal people were victims of homicide at a rate which was about six times higher than that of non-aboriginal people” and at the same time, “aboriginal people [were] accused of homicide at a rate 10 times higher than non-aboriginal people.”

Some of the underlying reasons for this became very clear in the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Canada was responsible for a state-sanctioned form of repression of aboriginal people that the commission characterized as “cultural genocide ... the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group.” In particular, the commission noted, “families are disrupted.”

Not surprisingly, this disruption of family, community and culture can lead to violence, mainly turned inward on the family and the community.

So we need to focus not only on the international situation but on the prevention of domestic violence, and repairing the ravages of Canada’s policy of cultural genocide against aboriginal people. Good things to ponder in this season of peace.

Dr. Trevor Hancock is a professor and senior scholar at the University of Victoria’s school of public health and social policy.

- See more at: <http://www.timescolonist.com/opinion/columnists/trevor-hancock-peace-on-earth-and-especially-at-home-1.2138885#sthash.XyYC8oGc.dpuf>

# Aboriginal Education & Youth

## Aboriginal, int'l students drive college plan

By [Brian Kelly](#), Sault Star

Friday, December 18, 2015 9:29:43 EST AM



Ron Common, president of Sault College, shakes hands with Marnie Yourchuk, NETC chair, as college board of governors chair Peter Berlingieri looks on during an indigenous education protocol signing ceremony at Sault College in Sault

Sault College will ramp up its commitment to aboriginal education to support its enrolment numbers over the next five years.

A centre of excellence for aboriginal education is part of the post-secondary institution's ambitions in its new five-year plan, *Leading the Way*.

"Our traditional commitment at Sault College to aboriginal education will increase significantly in this new plan," president Ron Common told the board of governors during a meeting on Thursday. "We commit more resources to First Nations and training institutes, to First Nation partnerships and community-based programming and to the employment of aboriginal people at Sault College."

The college also plans to have "aboriginal perspectives and world views put in the existing curriculum" for non-aboriginal specific programs, Common told reporters after the meeting's open portion.

Sault College plans to recruit aboriginal students from the province. It's relying on these students, plus those from other countries, to make up for "demographic challenges" in Algoma District.

"(These) are clearly two areas where we have opportunities for growth in numbers," said Common.

About 25% of the college's 2,332 students identify themselves as First Nations. Seventy-two students from 16 countries are on campus this semester.

Sault College does not have specific enrolment targets for these two student groups in Leading the Way.

“We know that we cannot rely on our regional population alone for our enrolment,” said Common. “Increasingly, we have to attract out-of-region students. We have to attract international students. We have to attract aboriginal students.”

Sault College is also counting on extracurricular opportunities, such as hiking, skiing and watersports, to draw students to move to Sault Ste. Marie for their post-secondary education. The goal, said Common, is for Sault College “to be recognized around the province as the destination college for student to study, to play, to stay and to work.”

If government funding is available, Sault College wants to build a waterfront and tennis centre at the former RYTAC site on Queen Street East beginning in the summer of 2016.

The current clubhouse would be demolished because it's in poor condition.

“We want our students when they leave here to say, 'I got the education I wanted and more,’” said Common. “We're going to focus on the 'and more.' We want to focus on the whole student experience, not just academics.”

Other priorities for the college between 2016 and 2020 include offering more graduate certificate programs and student opportunities for experiential learning and applied research.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.saultstar.com/2015/12/18/aboriginalinternational-students-drive-college-plan>

## **'Decolonization' is the solution for aboriginal education, Nunavut education experts say**

**'It's about looking at how we are a proud people,' says Karla Jessen Williamson**

By Kieran Oudshoorn, [CBC News](#) Posted: Dec 19, 2015 5:01 AM CT Last Updated: Dec 19, 2015 5:01 AM CT



Karla Jessen Williamson, shown here in Iqaluit, is an Inuk from Greenland and an assistant professor of educational foundations at the University of Saskatchewan. 'Decolonization for me is looking at what the Inuit generations have done previously before we entered into the colonizer's mindset.' (Kieran Oudshoorn/CBC)

Now that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report has again exposed weaknesses in the education of aboriginal people in Canada, some Northern education advocates say the solution is a process called "decolonization."

Karla Jessen Williamson is an Inuk from Greenland and an assistant professor of educational foundations at the University of Saskatchewan.

"Decolonization for me is looking at what the Inuit generations have done previously before we entered into the colonizer's mindset," she said.



'A true Inuit thing to do is to be able to put the kids [outside] with the elements to learn about their place.'  
(Kieran Oudshoorn/CBC)

"It's about looking at how we are a proud people, able to sustain ourselves in the Arctic and then how we can interpret that into the institutional forms of education that we have today."

Williamson says decolonizing education means continuing to emphasize Inuit language skills as well as doing more to incorporate land-based knowledge, both practical and spiritual, specific to the region students live in.

She agrees much of that work has already started, but says the fact that children continue to spend the majority of their school time sitting indoors is a indication of a colonized mind set.

"A true Inuit thing to do," she explains, "is to be able to put the kids [outside] with the elements to learn about their place."

## Ahead of the curve

Of the 94 "**calls to action**" issued by the **TRC**, seven deal directly with education. They included closing the funding gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal students as well as developing culturally appropriate curricula — including the protection of Aboriginal languages.



Education Minister Paul Quassa says Nunavut has strong language protection laws, and added the study of residential schools to the Grade 10 curriculum in 2013. (Kieran Oudshoorn/CBC)

Nunavut's education minister, Paul Quassa, says in some regards the territory is ahead of the curve. Nunavut has legislation protecting Inuit languages, and in 2013, the department added the study of residential schools in their Grade 10 curriculum.

Quassa says that's because, unlike most other indigenous peoples in Canada, Inuit still make up the majority of the population in Nunavut and have achieved a relative degree of self-governance.

"That's why we negotiated the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement," Quassa said "To get back to our culture, to retain our language and to ensure that Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (Inuit traditional knowledge) is respected."

## Lessons to learn

Heather McGregor is a Ph.D. graduate who spent part of her childhood in Iqaluit. Her thesis on decolonizing Nunavut's school systems was published earlier this year.

During her research, she looked at three aspects of how Nunavut has approached developing their own education system.

- The role of elders in preserving and incorporating Inuit traditional knowledge into the Nunavut school system;
- Development of an internal curriculum based on collaboration between Inuit educators and long term northerners, and:
- Leadership training designed specifically for Nunavut principals.

What Nunavut has accomplished in terms of education is unique, said McGregor, yielding many success stories that should be considered by southern school systems wanting to incorporate a greater aboriginal content.

But she also cautions that schools cannot replace traditional ways of sharing knowledge between parents, grandparents and children. Her research found that when Inuit introduce traditional knowledge to western-style school, that knowledge is changed and altered.

"Schools are institutions," McGregor said. "They come from western systems and western ways of understanding and organising knowledge and there is a lot of work to be done in figuring out how schools could be done differently."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/decolonization-as-solution-to-aboriginal-education-1.3371382>

## **B.C.'s Turpel-Lafond deserves credit for role as children's watchdog**

**GARY MASON**

VANCOUVER — The Globe and Mail

Published Friday, Dec. 18, 2015 7:55PM EST

Last updated Friday, Dec. 18, 2015 7:56PM EST

Among those jumping to the defence of B.C.'s children's watchdog following a report suggesting her office be phased out, the province's native leaders were arguably the most alarmed and outraged.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip called Bob Plecas's investigation zeroing in on Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond's office a "witch hunt" and "smear job." Doug Kelly, chair of the First Nations Health Council, decried the fact Premier Christy Clark was turning to "an old white guy" for advice. Cheam First Nation Chief Ernie Crey said the Plecas report constituted a "danger to the many thousands of aboriginal children in the province."

First Nations chiefs stood behind Ms. Turpel-Lafond at a news conference Monday at which the children's representative denounced Mr. Plecas for recommending her duties be taken over by government.

The strong show of a support from the province's aboriginal leadership was surprising. It wasn't long ago that many of these same chiefs were slamming Ms. Turpel-Lafond for one of her own reports. In 2013, the representative revealed that tens of millions of dollars were given to aboriginal child welfare agencies and effectively wasted. The children the money was meant to protect remained as vulnerable as ever.

It was one of the most damning reports Ms. Turpel-Lafond had ever released.

As I say, the reaction from First Nations leaders was swift and furious. How dare Ms. Turpel-Lafond say such things? Afterward, she told me about some of the vitriolic e-mails and phone calls she received from First Nations representatives.

Now here we were, two years later, and many of these same people were indignant over the mere idea of Ms. Turpel-Lafond's office being eliminated.

Time heals all, it seems.

The role of delegated aboriginal child welfare agencies was not something Mr. Plecas touched on in his probe. He likely felt it was one hornets' nest he was best not stirring. But if not him, who? Because someone has to take another look at these authorities and report on how effective they are and ways they can be improved.

Perhaps this is something Chief Ed John will look at as part of his mandate to advise the province on aboriginal child welfare matters. Although in reviewing his marching orders from government, it does not appear that this is anything he's been asked to report back on. According to his contract, Mr. John has been asked to "provide a focused role on creating permanency for Aboriginal children in care; particularly those in care through continuing custody orders (in care until reaching the age of majority)."

Whatever that means.

It seems to me if the Ministry of Children and Family Development is going to come under constant criticism for the job it's doing, then other groups operating under the same umbrella should be fair game, too. Interestingly, it was Ms. Turpel-Lafond who argued the move by the B.C. government several years ago to offload responsibility for the aboriginal children in care to these delegated agencies was a huge mistake.

She said many children in First Nations communities being served by these bodies were not being served at all. There was a complete lack of oversight and accountability. There weren't the necessary personnel to properly staff the agencies. And many of the people who were working in them weren't properly trained.

But after saying this, and getting blasted by aboriginal leaders for doing so, that seemed to be the end of the matter.

That is not good enough. Honestly, I think people are simply afraid to tread down this path for fear of being branded racist or worse. What Ms. Turpel-Lafond did in voicing her criticisms took enormous courage. It will be difficult to find someone with the same strength of conviction to replace her when her time is up next year.

We all know what the statistics say about the gross over-representation of aboriginal children in care. That is something that continually needs to be addressed with the goal of significantly reducing that number over the next decade. But we also need to ensure that those children who are in need are getting the best care possible, regardless of who's delivering it.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/bcs-turpel-lafond-deserves-credit-for-role-as-childrens-watchdog/article27876105/>

## **TRC calls for education as a tool for reconciliation**

## Why moving from truth to reconciliation may mean using a teepee to teach math

By Bridget Forbes, [CBC News](#) Posted: Dec 19, 2015 3:38 PM CT Last Updated: Dec 19, 2015 10:32 PM CT



Grade 11 students at Kelvin High School learn about Treaty 5 through role playing. (Raymond Sokalski)

When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released the 94 calls to action, all the schools in the Winnipeg School Division were sent a copy. Marsha Missyabit, an aboriginal education consultant for the school division, says she wanted teachers to be aware of the calls to action and educate their students about them.

"We're looking at a national reconciliation through restoring respectful relationships between all people living here," Missyabit said. Several of the TRC's recommendations call for changes in education, including changes to the curriculum, that would make teaching about residential schools and treaties mandatory for students from kindergarten to Grade 12.

"A lot of teachers are coming to us with questions about [residential schools], asking why they were not taught this when they were attending school," Missyabit said, adding she does professional development workshops for teachers in the division about the history of residential schools.

Missyabit said she met a teacher last week who had never heard of residential schools.

"There's a lot of shock for people who are hearing about this for the first time," she said.

Raymond Sokalski has been teaching about residential schools for 25 years. The social studies teacher at Kelvin High School said he's already seen a change in the way indigenous history is taught.



Grade 11 student Lauren MacCrae learns about treaties through role play. (Raymond Sokalski)

Each year Grade 11 students in Sokalski's class spend a week studying the history of treaties through role play. Students take on the role of real historical figures who were implicated in the negotiations of Treaty 5 at Norway House in 1875.

"It's so important to put [students] in the flesh of somebody whose entire future and the future of their children's children's children depended on what amounted to 48 hours [of negotiation]," said Sokalski. "The reflections they write afterwards show me they understand how much the dice were loaded against First Nations.

"The reason we do it every semester is because it's so gratifying to see the responses."

Both Sokalski and Missyabit look forward to a time when indigenous perspectives permeate all subject matter. Missyabit and the aboriginal education team in the school division have already been working on that. They're creating lesson plans in math, science and language arts that help teachers educate students about the diversity of aboriginal people and their contributions.



Aboriginal education consultant Marsha Missyabit said teachers can teach math using elements of indigenous culture, like the teepee. (Jenn Smith Nelson)

"There's lots of math in homes and dwellings," said Missyabit. She uses the teepee as an example to teach younger students shapes and older students concepts like length and circumference.

"It's just making those connections with an aboriginal perspective, because we are on indigenous soil."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/trc-calls-for-education-as-a-tool-for-reconciliation-1.3372491>

## Manitoba First Nations step up amid record number of children in care

CHINTA PUXLEY, THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Diane Redsky, executive director of Ma Mawi Chi Itata Centre, said poverty plays a big role in the number of aboriginal children in care in Manitoba. (FILE PHOTO)

When Angeline Spence got pregnant at 17, she was determined her child wouldn't end up being one of Manitoba's 10,000 kids in care.

Spence was taken from her parents when she was eight. She became a permanent ward of Child and Family Services, separated from her siblings, her extended family and her indigenous culture.

"My main goal growing up was not ever having my child go through that ... to try to get out of that cycle of my kids being in care," Spence said.

She was lucky enough to get into a program run by Winnipeg's Ma Mawi Wi Itata centre. A case worker brought her social worker, friend and her baby's father's family together in one room where they worked out a support plan for Spence and her daughter.

Spence lived in supported housing while she finished school before coming back to work for Ma Mawi Wi Itata to help other young mothers keep their children from becoming wards of the province.

"Just because you were in care, it shouldn't limit you to what you can do."

Manitoba has among the highest number of children in care in Canada. Statistics show the province seizes an average of one newborn baby each day. The vast majority are indigenous.

In the face of such daunting numbers, indigenous people are offering their own solutions to try to keep their children out of the system.

Ma Mawi Wi Itata runs two family group conferencing programs --based on a model from the Maori in New Zealand -- that place indigenous children in care in specialized, culturally appropriate foster homes.

Their parents are brought together with child-welfare workers, family members, addictions counsellors and anyone else who can help address the reasons why the children have been apprehended.

Executive director Diane Redsky said the vast majority of children in care are seized because of poverty masking as neglect.

Sometimes the solution is as simple as buying a family a washer and dryer and providing some extra food bank donations. Other times, working out a family plan is more complicated.

But through it all, the children in care maintain contact with their parents and extended family.

"The bond between family and child hasn't been broken," Redsky said. "There's little disruption for the kids."

It costs about \$500,000 to run two of the programs, but Redsky estimates they save child welfare well over twice that annually. Of the 62 kids one program worked with last year, all but 13 stayed out of the system.

"It saves spirits and it saves money."

The centre wants to expand and work with families before their children are taken into care. The problem, Redsky said, is that funding only starts to flow once children are officially seized.

Manitoba's NDP government has said it's shifting its focus from apprehension and toward prevention. Family Services Minister Kerri Irvin-Ross recently announced the province will give First Nations greater control over caring for their children as an alternative to formal apprehension.

She said programs like the one run by Ma Mawi Wi Itata are a vital part of the mindshift, but it's up to individual child-welfare agencies to decide whether to use their funding to support such initiatives.

"We're not seeing it throughout the agencies and authorities as much as we would like," she said.

Leaving the decision in the hands of child-welfare agencies whose funding is partly contingent on the number of kids in care is "not a conflict of interest," Irvin-Ross said.

"Our primary goal is to keep kids out of care."

The Sagkeeng First Nation started the Circle of Care program just a few months after the body of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine was found wrapped in a bag in Winnipeg's Red River.

Tina's guardians, struggling with her behaviour, voluntarily placed her in care. She was taken from the reserve to Winnipeg, where she was killed a few weeks later after running away from foster care.

Harold Fontaine, who runs the program, works with about a dozen families. Like Ma Mawi Wi Itata, Circle of Care brings parents together with social workers, family members and any other community supports. Their apprehended kids stay on the reserve and can see their parents. For the first time, he said, parents don't feel like they are alone.

"There's hope for them," Fontaine said. "It's giving them a voice."

First Nations children's advocate Cora Morgan said these programs must be expanded -- and fast. There are about 600 kids in care on the Sagkeeng First Nation, she said.

Indigenous-led programs need to be available on a wide scale to make Manitoba a leader in child-welfare innovation rather than apprehension rates, she suggested.

"It's First Nations helping their own people," said Morgan. "It offers hope to families that are struggling to know that those services exist."

Some facts about Manitoba's child-welfare system:

- 10,293 children in care in 2014
- 57 per cent are permanent wards
- 87 per cent of the children in care are indigenous
- 22 per cent of all First Nations children end up in care at some point in their lives compared with slightly more than 1.5 per cent of non-indigenous children
- Indigenous families are investigated for abuse or neglect at a rate four times higher than non-indigenous families
- Three per cent of infants in Manitoba are placed in care
- Manitoba seizes an average of one newborn baby a day
- 45 per cent of apprehended newborns have developmental or addiction issues

- 7.5 per cent of all Manitoba children have been in care by the time they are seven years old

*(Sources: The Children's Advocate, Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, Manitoba government, University of Manitoba)*

**Direct Link:** <http://www.winnipegsun.com/2015/12/20/manitoba-first-nations-step-up-amid-record-number-of-children-in-case>

## **Local schools working toward reconciliation**

By: James Allum - Fort Garry-Riverview MLA Constituency Report

Posted: 12/21/2015 11:50 AM

DANIELLE DA SILVA - SOU'WESTER

Children enjoy the new turtle petroform made from stumps on a mild evening at École Riverview School.

The path toward reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples is not an easy one, but our education system is already responding to the challenge.

We've put forward legislation to enshrine two key principles in law: requiring the curriculum to include content on First Nations, Metis and Inuit culture and history, and moving forward on educational achievement for First Nations, Metis, and Inuit students.

The work our government is doing to fulfil the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is matched by some wonderful initiatives at schools in Fort Garry, Riverview and across Manitoba.

Many indigenous peoples believe that everyone is connected. When you enter Lord Roberts School, the first thing you see is a beautiful mural that reflects that belief. It's just one example of how Lord Roberts has integrated Aboriginal perspectives into the daily life of their students.

The parent council at École Riverview School worked with Plains Projects, a local design company, to integrate indigenous culture into their new outdoor classroom. This innovative project features a giant turtle gathering space. In the Seven Sacred Teachings of the Anishinaabe nation, the turtle represents truth. École Riverview plans to add silhouettes to the school wall representing all of the Seven Sacred Teachings during the coming Spring.

École Crane School in Fort Garry is doing their part too, incorporating indigenous culture into their playground with a planned tipi and canoe. Together with École Viscount Alexander School, they are working on a family night celebrating Métis culture.

Students at Churchill High School can earn a half or full academic credit through the Aboriginal Youth Leadership program. Among other things, they learn about and participate in traditional indigenous culture. Churchill also has a drum group and an Aboriginal leadership group, as well as a new course in Aboriginal Studies where students learn about treaty relations, missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and other important topics that our government is acting on.

The teachings that are being incorporated at all of these schools are critical to the process of reconciliation. Integrating indigenous culture into our lives will weave indigenous and non-indigenous narratives together. Though we have many miles to go, our provincial education system is taking action to make reconciliation a reality.

If you have any questions, please give my office a call at 204-475-2270 or email [James.Allum@YourManitoba.ca](mailto:James.Allum@YourManitoba.ca). You can also follow me on Twitter at @jamesallummb for news and announcements from our community.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/our-communities/souwester/forum/Local-schools-working-toward-reconciliation-363148851.html>

## **Op-Ed: Indigenous studies is central to liberal arts education in Canada**

THOMAS MCMORROW

NATALIE OMAN

RACHEL ARISS

**Published on: December 21, 2015 | Last Updated: December 21, 2015 2:32 PM EST**



Commissioner Justice Murray Sinclair pauses and places his hands on the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation commission following its unveiling, Tuesday December 15, 2015 in Ottawa.

The universities of Winnipeg and Lakehead recently announced plans to integrate compulsory indigenous-focused courses across their programs. Critics have objected to these proposals, claiming that introducing mandatory courses will hinder freedom of thought and freedom of choice. These objections stem from two faulty assumptions.

First is the assumption that, within any given university, students are consumers whose aggregated preferences rightfully dictate curriculum design, course content and teaching methods. The number of “likes,” rather than the quality of the reasoning that informs them, reigns supreme.

But in fact, universities impose many specific requirements that students must meet in order to earn different kinds of degrees. That’s because the mission of universities is not to offer a smorgasbord of “whatever the customer wants” it’s to educate for a purpose.

That purpose is one which the college of academics who are collectively responsible for the scholastic standards of each university determines — based on their common deliberation, which builds on their diverse training, experiences and professional expertise.

No university in the world allows students to study whatever subject they want to, in whatever manner they wish. Rather, all universities have the responsibility to decide how to facilitate the kinds of student learning opportunities they deem primary to their missions.

Students may choose to attend whichever university admits them. They can also choose among their electives, but in any given program, a certain number of core courses are mandatory. Fundamental to university education is encouraging students to question everything they see, hear and read — not so that they become cynics, but so that they learn to be responsible citizens working for the common good.

Critically engaging with colonialism and its legacies in indigenous and non-indigenous relations is central to questioning what the common good means for Canada today.

The second faulty assumption is that study of indigenous peoples’ history in Canada is equivalent to the study of any oppressed people. This is precisely the kind of glib assertion that universities must invite students to question. Universities should promote reflection on the history and legacies of colonialism and residential schools, increase awareness of indigenous ways of knowing and foster critical engagement with the ongoing consequences of our colonial past.

As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission said, education remains an important way to address the lingering harms of that past. It is only through informed conversations confronting ignorance, racism and indifference about these issues that any attempt at reconciliation stands a chance.

In our diverse society, publicly-funded institutions of learning must contribute to the creation of engaged citizens who are alive to social justice concerns. We live in a country that is literally built upon a profound injustice – historical and ongoing colonialism.

At its heart colonialism is about hierarchy and exclusion, and this same set of relations of power has been reiterated in different forms again and again to the benefit of the privileged. So, as academics, we judge that in order to become engaged citizens, our students must become familiar with the assumptions and histories which perpetuate this pattern.

The future of this country and everyone in it depends on a concerted effort to challenge those privileged with a university education to discover things about the world and about themselves that they may not realize they do not know. Unreflective invocations of individual freedom risk drowning out the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to become true partners in reconciliation.

The real task faced by universities planning to introduce indigenous studies requirements is to design courses incorporating teaching and learning strategies that shun tokenism and support genuine engagement.

Not only does this work fall four-square within the intellectual mission of universities; it presents an opportunity for these institutions of higher learning to re-imagine liberal arts education for the 21st century.

**Thomas McMorrow, Natalie Oman and Rachel Ariss** are all assistant professors of legal studies at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology.

**Direct Link:** <http://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/columnists/op-ed-indigenous-studies-is-central-to-liberal-arts-education-in-canada>

## **Rights tribunal ruling on aboriginal welfare could test Liberal response to TRC**

**about 2 hours ago by: Canadian Press**

OTTAWA — The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal is expected to issue a ruling in the next month that could remove the government's discretion to deal with one the central issues flagged by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The quasi-judicial body is set to weigh in on whether the federal government discriminated against First Nations children by not funding child welfare services on reserve at the same level as services elsewhere.

The challenge to funding levels was first raised in 2007 by the Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. Six years after the initial complaint, 72 days of hearings were held.

The judgment could mark the first time in history where the government would be compelled to address the issue, says a spokesperson for one of the groups.

"It makes it a legally-binding decision," said Cindy Blackstock, president of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada.

The TRC, which spent six years documenting Canada's painful residential school legacy, raised the need for changes to aboriginal child welfare in its sweeping 94 recommendations released in June.

It said governments, including at the federal level, need to reduce the number of aboriginal children who are apprehended by providing adequate resources for communities and child-welfare organizations.

It also called for the government to enact child welfare legislation that establishes national standards for aboriginal child apprehension and custody cases.

The Liberal government has committed to implementing all of the suggestions from the TRC but advocates are waiting for action.

"I'm hoping with this new tone in government, they will see that as an opportunity to make sure they do the right thing and not just talk about it because talk doesn't change children's lives," said Blackstock.

"When it comes to child welfare, we know from the government's own documents that they're underfunding between 22 per cent and 38 and a half per cent, less than what other children get across the country."

The underfunding has resulted in record numbers of children in child welfare care, she added, suggesting children cannot afford to wait any longer.

"(There are) three times the number of First Nations children in child welfare care today than at the height of residential schools," Blackstock said. "So, what I want to see is that remedied because what we need to do is we need to have services to support families at the earliest stages before things reach a crisis point."

Indigenous Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett did not provide comment on the upcoming ruling on Tuesday.

**Direct Link:** <https://www.baytoday.ca/national/rights-tribunal-ruling-on-aboriginal-welfare-could-test-liberal-response-to-trc-82766>

# Debunking the myth that Canadian schools teach enough about indigenous people

**To hear some tell it, Canadians are already experts on indigenous cultures and contemporary realities**

By Chelsea Vowel, CBC News Posted: Dec 23, 2015 6:00 AM ET Last Updated: Dec 23, 2015 6:00 AM ET



Grade 11 students at Winnipeg's Kelvin High School learn about Treaty 5 through role playing. Scenes like this are few and far between, Chelsea Vowel writes. (Raymond Sokalski)

Whenever there is talk about the need for systemic changes to ensure Canadians learn about Indigenous peoples, a veritable tsunami of anecdotes pour in. To hear some tell it, Canadians are already experts on indigenous cultures, history and contemporary realities.

I majored in secondary social studies during my Bachelor of Education, and I remember listening to some of my fellow teachers-in-training complain about the "pointless Aboriginal content" in a mandatory Canadian history course. "I made a dream catcher in grade six," one said. Another one had "done that smudge thing that smells like weed" in her school.

During law school, a peer let me know she was very knowledgeable about my people (I'm not sure she realized I'm Métis) because in her school, they'd grown the Three Sisters (beans, corns and squash, it's sort of a Haudenosaunee thing).

On my twitter feed, another person claims that she didn't learn European history in high school because "indigenous studies [were] mandatory and WW2 was not".

That this is provably untrue doesn't really matter if the purpose of such claims are merely to bolster a rhetorical point: forcing people to learn more than they already apparently know about Indigenous peoples is akin to "brainwashing", "fascism" and any number of other less repeatable terms.

There is a lot to unpack here, but I wanted to focus specifically on what Canadians are actually learning about indigenous peoples. Is it enough? Are the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's educational calls to action unnecessary?

The TRC's Call to Action 62.1 exhorts governments in Canada "in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students."

## No mandatory courses K-12

Since the current debate centres around mandatory courses at the post-secondary level such as those recently announced at the University of Winnipeg I thought it made sense to look at what Canadians are learning before they get to that point.

Educational curricula are a provincial concern, so what is taught in Canada varies greatly. To know what elementary and secondary level students in any given province or territory are learning about Indigenous peoples, you need to access Ministry of Education sites and look through the curriculum. When it comes to elective courses, you also have to look at each school board to see which schools actually offer those courses.

In Canada there are no mandatory indigenous studies courses, meaning one can graduate from high school without ever having to take such a class. Only five provinces even offer elective indigenous studies courses, and there is no guarantee these elective courses will be available in any given school.

Interested students in Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island cannot even choose to take an indigenous studies course.

Seven provinces have developed a curriculum to teach an indigenous language but these courses tend to be even less available due to lack of qualified language teachers.

## Empty promises



BC-based early childhood educator Kristin Webster teaches pre-school children about the dark history of Indian residential schools. Few have followed suit, says Chelsea Vowel. (Glen Kugelstadt)

Surely there are no mandatory indigenous studies courses because these topics are already a "primary focus of social science and history classes from kindergarten" on, right?

In October, 2015, KAIROS (Canadian churches working together for justice and peace) took a look at how much Canadian students are actually learning about indigenous peoples in elementary and secondary school.

They issued a report card on provincial and territorial curriculum using the TRC's Call to Action 62.1. They examined whether or not curricula include the four elements identified: residential school legacy, treaties, historical contributions and contemporary contributions.

KAIROS also looked at whether these elements are mandatory, and at what grade levels they are offered. Further, public commitment by provinces and territories was measured against actual implementation.

Turns out no provinces or territories received top marks for their public commitment to Call to Action 62.1. Only the prairie provinces received a passing grade; all other jurisdictions have so far failed to make significant public commitment to integrating these topics into the general learning outcomes. That means, most places in Canada aren't even issuing empty promises to follow the TRC's recommendation.

In terms of actual implementation, seven of the provinces and territories have one of the four elements included in their learning outcomes and only Saskatchewan can boast teaching more than one of the four elements (though not all). In our most populous provinces, Ontario and Quebec, none of the four elements are adequately covered in the curriculum.

In seven of the eight provinces that cover at least one of the recommended topics, this learning is mandatory in only one grade. Saskatchewan out performs all other provinces and territories in Canada and still does not even come close to K-12 integration of mandatory coverage of the four elements recommended by the TRC.

It seems that anecdotes do not translate into actual Canada-wide learning outcomes.

Huh, maybe those mandatory indigenous studies courses at the post-secondary level are necessary after all, at least until the K-12 curriculum is revamped.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/debunking-myth-canadian-schools-teach-indigenous-peoples-1.3376800?cmp=abfb>

## **Sto:lo Tribal Council calls for resignations following Plecas report**

Members say recommendations pose 'threat to Aboriginal children'

BY MATTHEW ROBINSON, VANCOUVER SUN DECEMBER 23, 2015



Bob Plecas's report recommended that B.C.'s children and youth watchdog hand over her investigative powers to the ministry.

Members of the Sto:lo Tribal Council have demanded the resignations of Grand Chief Ed John and Bob Plecas from their respective roles with the provincial Ministry of Children and Family Development.

They have also called for B.C. to "immediately shelve" a recent report by Plecas that recommended B.C.'s children and youth watchdog hand over her investigative powers to the ministry.

"Both his report and its recommendations, if adopted by the MCFD, pose an immediate threat to Aboriginal children in the care of the ministry," read the Sto:lo resolution, which passed unanimously in a vote late last week.

For Ernie Crey, the newly elected chief of the Cheam First Nation, Plecas's recommendation to clip the wings of Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond's office was troubling.

"Who's left to champion all these kids in government care? ... Her voice is too important when it comes to the health, well-being and safety of Aboriginal kids in government care. If there isn't an independent voice producing these reports on incidents like injuries and deaths and abuses that these children suffer while in government care, then who will?" Crey said in an interview.

Crey said it is clear the ministry is not doing a good job.

"If (Turpel-Lafond's) voice was ever needed, it's now," Crey said. "She's the only champion, really, that these children have."

At least 60 per cent of children in government care are Aboriginal. The First Nations Leadership Council dismissed the Plecas report as "biased" and an attack on Turpel-

Lafond. The letter was co-signed by Grand Chief Ed John, whom the premier recently appointed as a special adviser to help find permanent homes for children in care.

But the Sto:lo vote also called for John's resignation, noting that his role as adviser "cannot be reconciled with his positions" on the council and the First Nations Summit Task Group.

Crey explained it was not a case where there was a lack of support for John or what he was trying to accomplish, but rather with the province's approach to consultations.

"The Minister and Deputy Minister have stated in writing and in public that they are not required to consult First Nations leaders and organizations such as the First Nations Health Council because they hired Grand Chief Edward John," read the Sto:lo resolution.

"We have children in care. Sure, by all means talk to Ed. But not under these circumstances," Crey said. "If anyone is going to be consulted about planning for our children, it's us. It's not going to be just Mr. John."

Crey said it would be the best thing for John to step aside because the onerous task of talking to government alone about the health, welfare and disposition of children in care appeared to be a recent change to his mandate.

Were John to step aside, the decision would open the door for government to speak to many different First Nations organizations, he added.

"It was a very emotional debate. The membership are firmly onside and they support the motion. Right now it's over to Grand Chief Ed John and more than that, it's over to the premier," Crey said.

**Direct Link:**

<http://www.vancouversun.com/life/tribal+council+calls+resignations+following+plecas+report/11608380/story.html>

## Aboriginal Health

### **'I didn't want it done': Saskatoon woman was sterilized against her will**

**Brenda Pelletier says she was hounded to sign a consent form for tubal ligation after giving birth**

CBC News Posted: Nov 18, 2015 6:09 PM CT Last Updated: Nov 19, 2015 9:20 AM CT

A Saskatoon woman sterilized against her will five years ago says she is still suffering physically and emotionally from the procedure.

Brenda Pelletier told CBC News she was a recovering addict when she underwent a tubal ligation at Royal University Hospital. Her mother was caring for her twin sons and four other children at the time.

When Pelletier delivered her youngest daughter, a social worker told her she couldn't leave until she had a tubal ligation. She said she was hounded to sign the consent form.



Brenda Pelletier says she was pressured to get tubal ligation after she delivered her daughter at Royal University Hospital five years ago. (CBC)

"Constantly, like every couple hours. I don't know if it was two hours or three hours but it was non-stop, all day, all night," Pelletier said. "Like right up until you better sign that, the operating room's ready."

Even in the operating room, Pelletier recalled, she said, "I don't want this," adding she thought the procedure would only involve using clamps on her tubes, nothing more.

## **'Just burning the ends'**

"You know I'm laying there, scared enough, not wanting this done, even telling her I didn't want it done," Pelletier recalled. "Then, all of a sudden, I smell something burned. If I could have jumped off that table I probably would have."

She said "the anaesthesiologist was at my head and he said, 'It's OK dear. They're just burning the ends.'"

Pelletier said she still feels the emotional impact of what happened to her in hospital after she gave birth to her daughter.

"They tried to put that fear in me like if you don't do this we're going to take her from you," she said.

Pelletier said she had to return to hospital a week after the procedure because she was hemorrhaging. She said she still suffers painful, heavy menstruation.

Pelletier, who is Cree Métis, said she knows another woman, also an aboriginal, who had the same thing happen to her.

CBC has been in touch with a third woman, Roxanne Ledoux, who is Cree. She is also a recovering addict who confirmed to CBC that she was also told she needed to have a tubal ligation or she would be called a "negligent mother."

## Hospital apologizes

Officials at the Saskatoon health region said they've apologized to Pelletier and another woman with a similar story.



Jackie Mann, vice-president of integrated health services with the Saskatoon Health Region, says Royal University Hospital has changed its policies on tubal ligation: Women talk it over with their physician before they arrive in hospital to deliver their baby. (CBC)

"When I met with the women I felt very sorry," said Jackie Mann, vice-president for integrated health services. "I expressed to them my apology that the experience they had in our care its not the kind of experience we would ever want a woman to have in our care."

Mann said an external review has been ordered. The person who will head that review will be selected in the next week or two.

Mann said she cannot confirm whether other women felt pressured to have the operation. However, Mann confirmed that in 2010, about 94 tubal ligation procedures were done after vaginal delivery. In 2015, the procedure was performed only 20 times.

Mann said the health region has changed its policy: "We want to ensure that that woman has had that conversation [about whether to have a tubal ligation] with her physician prior to coming to the hospital."

Mann said any patient who has concerns about the care received in the Saskatoon Health Region should contact the client representative's office, adding there has been no discussion of compensation for the women at this point.

Pelletier said she wants to see the policy change in writing: "I trust nobody."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/i-didn-t-want-it-done-saskatoon-woman-was-sterilized-against-her-will-1.3324980>

## **First Nations detox centre expands to eastern Fraser Valley**

**Vancouver, BC, Canada / News Talk 980 CKNW | Vancouver's News.  
Vancouver's Talk**

[CKNW News Staff](#)

December 18, 2015 06:14 pm



A new mobile home and detox centre is now available for First Nations communities in the eastern Fraser Valley.

Building on an original centre brought in five years ago, the new facility has expanded to Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows and Mission.

The new team works with First Nations elders and spiritual healers to help the treatment process.

First Nations Health Authority chief operating officer Richard Jock says the 24-hour unit is unique.

“If First Nations people are experiencing crisis in mental health, and in particular, substance abuse that they get immediate attention in a very professional way right close to their community.”

The expansion comes on the heels of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission releasing its final report.

“I think that these kinds of approaches are our way of implementing the recommendations that come from that important body of work.”

He says he hopes it will lead to similar programs across the province.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cknw.com/2015/12/18/127760/>

## **Council, First Nations Chiefs want detox centre**

By Michael Potestio on December 22, 2015



The Committee of the Whole meeting held on Dec. 15. (Michael Potestio/Herald)

Merritt city council and the chiefs of the area First Nations bands are working together to try and establish a trauma and detox treatment centre in the Nicola Valley.

At a Committee of the Whole meeting held last Tuesday (Dec.15), members of Merritt's city council and four of the five chiefs discussed the idea, agreeing to put together some numbers and other information to show the provincial and federal governments that this type of facility is needed here and to gain their support.

“Myself and the mayor — and we'll also have some support staff — we're going to meet in the first week of January and we're going to put something together in terms of a needs assessment,” Lower Nicola Band Chief Aaron Sam told reporters after the meeting.

He said once that's in place, he hopes the chiefs and city council can meet with local MLA Jackie Tegart and/or MP Dan Albas in February to discuss the possibility of establishing this facility.

“I’m really excited about this. I don’t even have a vision of what it’s going to take to get something like this into reality, but I’m willing to make a commitment to bring it into reality,” said Upper Nicola Band Chief Harvey McLeod to his fellow chiefs and city council.

At the meeting, Sam pointed out that when it comes to drug and alcohol issues there isn’t anything currently accessible in the Nicola Valley, forcing those who need help to look outside of town.

“What I would like to see in this valley is for us to have these kind of treatment options be even more accessible so people don’t have to travel to Kamloops or the Okanagan,” he said.

Coun. Mike Goetz said that when he first arrived in Merritt in the 70s, the town had a detox centre, and today it’s “one of the most important things we need.”

Chief of the Shackan Band, Percy Joe, said that he’s seen some of his community members dealing with drug and alcohol issues sent to treatment centres only to see them relapse.

“The issue I’m starting to see is when they come out they enter right back in to the same environment that they left,” Joe said.

The chiefs and city council also agreed to meet on a quarterly basis and work collaboratively on other issues that affect them.

“When we sit down with our [provincial or federal] representatives, if we’re sitting together united, and have a unified voice, we feel we’re going to be able to accomplish many different things,” Sam said.

In addition, the meeting was a first for these current chiefs and Merritt’s year-old city council.

“We haven’t had a meeting like this before, so it was really an introductory meeting with the mayor and council,” Sam said.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.merrittherald.com/council-first-nations-chiefs-want-detox-centre/>

## **Court program for drug addicts helping mostly white males, report finds**

**Program to divert addicts from prison into treatment is missing target of women, aboriginals, youth**

By Dean Beeby, [CBC News](#) Posted: Dec 23, 2015 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Dec 23, 2015 7:16 AM ET



A new Justice Canada study says a program to get drug addicts out of prison and into treatment is effective, but is not reaching its primary targets: aboriginals, women and youth.

A federal court program to divert drug addicts away from prison and into treatment is still not reaching the people it was supposed to help: aboriginals, women and youth.

A new evaluation says the program is largely helping white males over the age of 30, the same skewed population a previous assessment warned about six years ago.

Drug treatment courts "continue to experience difficulties ... attracting women, aboriginal people, other visible minorities and youth into the program, and retaining them once they have entered it," says a recently released report.



Drug Treatment Courts in Canada require addicts to stay drug-free for a year or more and to take counselling, while helping them to find housing and a job. (CBC)

"Caucasians, men, and individuals over 30 still represent the majority of ... participants."

The finding is part of an otherwise positive report on the Drug Treatment Court Funding Program, under which Justice Canada spends \$3.6 million annually for a diversionary system to stop the "revolving door" of addiction and crime.

A **five-year evaluation** posted earlier this month found that the program, then offered in six cities, is generally effective in reducing drug use and criminal recidivism, and is a much cheaper alternative to imprisonment, with net savings of up to 88 per cent.

## Repeats 2009 warning

Under the program, defence lawyers and Crown prosecutors nominate drug-addicted offenders for treatment that can last a year or more. The charged person must plead guilty, abide by a host of conditions that include regular urine tests for illicit drugs, and attend counselling.

The programs have an average "graduation" rate of 27 per cent, but even non-graduates were found to have cut their drug use and had fewer drug-related offences afterwards. Graduates must be drug-free, have proper housing, as well as a job or be enrolled in school.

The report repeated the warning of a [2009 evaluation](#), however, that the prime target groups of aboriginals, women and youth were still not getting into the programs, and that "individuals with little prior criminal history" were being served.

Drug courts were pioneered in Florida in 1989, and now number about 2,100 across the United States. Britain, Ireland, Australia and others also have them. In Canada, the first court was set up in Toronto in 1998, and there are now a handful in major cities.

"Drug courts work," says Ruth Mayhew, manager of drug-court treatment at Ottawa's Rideauwood Addiction and Family Services, where graduation rates exceed 50 per cent. "They help build communities. People do change."

The evaluation called on Justice Canada to work more closely with the courts and provinces to ensure "they serve the optimal target population." And department spokesman Andrew Gowling says officials are doing just that, "to identify best practices ... including reaching vulnerable populations such as youth, aboriginals and women."

At the same time, Rideauwood and other treatment centres are losing funding by stealth, as Justice Canada maintains the program's \$3.6-million national budget but spreads the money across more facilities, even as caseloads everywhere are rising.

## Net budget cut

The department has signed new three-year agreements with six provinces and two territories, effective April 1, 2015, and hopes to sign up the remainder soon under a new policy of dealing only with provincial and territorial governments, rather than funding individual drug-treatment court facilities.

But the net effect is a budget cut — to \$400,000 a year at Rideauwood, for example, from the \$550,000 they had been receiving just five years ago. Toronto's funding was similarly chopped, to \$600,000 from \$750,000.

Altogether, Ontario now is getting just \$1 million annually, down substantially from the \$1.7 million the two facilities in Ottawa and Toronto received in 2014-2015.

"It's making things way more challenged," says Mayhew. Adds her colleague, retiring executive-director Paul Welsh: "The money issue is across the board. They've now downloaded that problem on the provinces."



Drug addiction has social costs in Canada estimated at more than \$8 billion annually. (Winnipeg Police Service)

Asked about the cuts, Gowling said only that "program evaluations concluded that providing the funding to provinces and territories is more efficient and allows for better collaborative opportunities."

One study has estimated the annual social costs of illicit drug use in Canada at \$8.2 billion.

Drug Treatment Courts parallel another justice initiative, Mental Health Courts, which began in Toronto in the 1990s to divert offenders with mental health problems away from the criminal justice system and into treatment.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/drug-court-treatment-diversion-program-1.3376569>

## Aboriginal History

### **Day in History, Dec. 19, 1972: Alderman disgusted by 'secret' burial of Inuit killed in Hartwell crash**

CHRIS ZDEB, EDMONTON JOURNAL

[More from Chris Zdeb, Edmonton Journal](#)



David Kootook's headstone in Beechmount Cemetery.

Two Inuit victims of a famous Arctic mercy flight crash were buried in private plots at Beechmount Cemetery following a short graveside service attended only by two representatives of the NWT government.

David Kootook, 14, who was suffering from appendicitis, and Neemee Nulliayok, who was pregnant, were on a plane piloted by bush pilot Marten Hartwell that crashed Nov. 8th in the Northwest Territories south of Great Bear Lake during a flight from Cambridge Bay to Yellowknife. Nurse Judy Hill, who accompanied the patients, was killed on impact. Nulliayok died several hours later.

Hartwell and the teen survived the crash, although both of the pilot's ankles, his left knee and his nose were fractured. They survived the brutal harsh weather where the average temperature was -35 C. The teen helped save Hartwell's life by erecting a tent, collecting lichens for food after emergency rations ran out, and making fires. He died after the 20th day. Hartwell survived by eating part of the nurse's leg. He was found 31 days after the crash.

Hartwell was recuperating in Misericordia Hospital after surgery on his ankles at the time of the funerals.

A spokesman for the territorial government, which paid the funeral expenses, said relatives of both Inuit victims were unable to attend the funeral. Hill, 27, was cremated following a service a day earlier. Hill's mother and brother from Kingsbridge, England, flew to Edmonton for the services.

Edmonton Ald. Dave Ward, who was part Inuit, said the secrecy surrounding the burial was “disgusting.

“This is totally, bloody ignorant,” he said, “that in the capital city of Alberta and the gateway to the North, we would let a thing like this happen. This boy (David) gave his life in one of the most noble causes of keeping another person alive.

“It has me very angry. No one notified me or anyone else.”

If their families wanted a private funeral, the NWT government should have returned their bodies to Spence Bay where they lived, Ward said.

Art Sorenson, public relations chief for the territorial government, said RCMP at Spence Bay asked the families whether they wanted the bodies returned and they said no.

The simple funeral and Ward’s criticism of it kicked up a national furore, prompting Peter Ernerk, 25-year-old editor of the bilingual Inuit newspaper Tukisiviaksat, published by the territorial government, to say it was another example of white society imposing its will on Inuit people.

The simple funeral was perfectly normal by Inuit standards, he said.

“It is our custom that once a person is dead you don’t want to see him again. People don’t want to see the body again.”

The fuss over the funeral of Kootook and Nulliayok was uncalled for, Ernerk said.

Hartwell died April 2nd, 2013 at the age of 88.

**Direct Link:** <http://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/day-in-history-dec-19-1972-alderman-disgusted-by-secret-burial-of-inuit-killed-in-hartwell-crash>

## **Aboriginal Identity & Representation**

### **Nunavut language specialist recognized by governor general**

**Iqaluit's Leena Tatiggaq Evis, who started up Pirurvik, receives prestigious national medal**

THOMAS ROHNER, December 17, 2015 - 2:58 pm



Leena Tatiggaq Evic displays the Meritorious Service Cross she received from Governor General David Johnston at a ceremony at Rideau Hall in Ottawa, Dec. 11. Evic was recognized for her language and cultural instruction enterprise Pirurvik, which she launched with a partner in 2004. (PHOTO BY THOMAS ROHNER)



Rebecca Veevee, popular host of the APTN cooking show Nigitsiat, receives congratulations from Governor General David Johnston after Veevee received the Meritorious Service Medal at a ceremony in Ottawa Dec. 11. (PHOTO BY SGT. RONALD DUCHESNE)

Leena Tatiggaq Evic entered the ceremony room at Rideau Hall in Ottawa Dec. 11 to a standing ovation, humbled and touched as she accepted a Meritorious Service Cross from Canada’s governor general, David Johnston.

At the ceremony, Johnston recognized Evic, fellow Nunavummiut Rebecca Veevee and 41 other Canadians across all civil sectors for “exceptional deeds that have strengthened our society.”

“Just to be among such great Canadians was empowering,” Evic said Dec. 16 from her office in the Pirurvik Centre for Inuit Language, Culture and Well Being in Iqaluit.

“Everybody seemed very proud of the recipients; we were treated with high regard and respect.”

Evic received the award for her work with the Pirurvik Centre, a private business she set up with a business partner in 2004.

The centre takes a holistic approach to immersing clients in language and culture, which in turn benefits their well-being, Evic said.

Currently, the centre's main client is the Government of Nunavut, for which Evic provides Inuktitut language courses and cultural training to public servants.

But looking to the future, Evic hopes to expand and provide language and cultural services to Nunavummiut outside the public service.

"I'm very optimistic we'll expand when the time is right," said Evic, a former elementary school teacher and principal.

The Governor General also recognized Evic's work in developing an Inuktitut doctoral program — called Ingalangaittukuurvik — aimed at maintaining and restoring Inuit language and culture through high-level research and academic work.

Evic said the long-term goals of the program, which saw its first courses roll out this past fall, is to produce Inuit professors among current elders, and to provide the next generation of elders with that same opportunity.

"We held a lecture series on Inuit culture where we brought elders in, and we call them professors because that's what they really are — they have a high level of language and culture knowledge," she said, adding that the loss of current knowledge-holders makes this program urgent.

The next logical step would be to gain formal recognition for the program, which is set up as a non-profit enterprise, Evic said.

But for now, the centre — which supports the doctoral program — is settling into its new home near Iqaluit's Four Corners, beside the CIBC branch.

For Evic, who began her career as a teacher before working with the GN and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., the new location means a step closer to realizing her dream.

"My plan was always to plunge into the private sector and fulfil a dream I had," she said.

That dream, Evic explained, is to have a centre for Inuit where they can immerse themselves in their own language and culture, nurturing their own well-being and self-identity.

Five Canadians, including Evic, received the Meritorious Service Cross, awarded to professionals who lead by example and improve the quality of life of their community while bringing honour to Canada.

Rebecca Veevee of Iqaluit was among 38 Canadians to receive the Meritorious Service Medal in Ottawa Dec. 11.

The medal recognizes Veevee's work as host and chef of the Inuktitut-language cooking show "Nigitsiat," which promotes a return to Inuit traditional foods, a Dec. 8 news release from the Governor General's office said.

"Through her program she has demonstrated a commitment to combating a growing epidemic of diseases related to poor nutrition in northern communities," the release said.

**Direct Link:**

[http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nunavut\\_language\\_specialist\\_recognized\\_by\\_governor\\_general/](http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nunavut_language_specialist_recognized_by_governor_general/)

## **New Oji-Cree phrasebook launching in Thunder Bay**

**'Once you start learning your language it changes everything,' says translator Jerry Sawanas**

CBC News Posted: Dec 18, 2015 9:51 AM ET Last Updated: Dec 18, 2015 10:38 AM ET



'Pocket Oji-Cree' is a book to help anyone learn his traditional language, but he especially hopes it will encourage youth, said broadcaster and translator Jerry Sawanas. (Amy Hadley )

First Nations people hoping to hold onto the traditional language of Oji-Cree will have a new tool to help them.

*Pocket Oji-Cree* is a phrase book being launched in Thunder Bay, Ont. on Saturday, Dec. 19.

The book is full of handy phrases one might use when visiting an Oji-Cree community, said translator Jerry Sawanas, and it will serve a vital purpose in helping to keep the language alive - especially among younger generations

"It's for the kids. For the young people," he said. "They don't have the Aboriginal education that those of us that are older have. And this is great way to begin — going into

your culture by learning how to talk to your grandmother, your aunt, or elders in your community."

"Once you start learning your language it changes everything. It changes the way you think. It changes the way you look at the world. It goes from a dark place to a really bright place."

*Pocket Oji-Cree* is the fourth in a series of phrase books that began with *Pocket Ojibwa*, written by language teacher Patricia Ningewance Nadeau, and published by her company, Mazinaate Press in Winnipeg.

She wrote the original book about ten years ago, and it's since been translated into Cree, Inuktitut, and now Oji-Cree.

"Our languages are disappearing," she said. "What the government intended back when the residential schools were being built — they wanted to take the language away. And that's what they've almost done. And I want to do my part in reversing that."

The book is being launched at the Waverly Library in Thunder Bay, at 10 am on Saturday.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/new-oji-cree-phrasebook-launching-in-thunder-bay-1.3370565>

## Manitoba appoints first transgender judge

In addition to being transgender, appointee Kael McKenzie is also Metis and may well be Canada's first transgender judge.



Manitoba Attorney General Gord Mackintosh, file photo, 2003, was also attorney general back when legislation was changed to require consideration of diversity for the bench, said the change recognized the provincial bench wasn't reflecting the face of Manitoba and needed to be strengthened.

**By:** The Canadian Press, Published on Mon Dec 21 2015

WINNIPEG—Manitoba's attorney general says his province is ready for its first transgender judge, and possibly the first transgender judge in Canada.

Gord Mackintosh appointed Kael McKenzie to the provincial court last week.

McKenzie has been a Crown attorney in Manitoba for five years, and also practised family, commercial and civil law before that.

He received his law degree from the University of Manitoba in 2006.

Mackintosh says the province has worked to increase the diversity of the bench over the past decade after expanding the criteria in 2002 to include, not only professional excellence and community awareness, but also the diversity of Manitoba society.

He says in addition to being transgender, McKenzie is also Métis.

“Diversity is valued, along with the other qualifications for advancement to the bench,” Mackintosh said on Sunday. “We had a number of qualified candidates.

“The fact that Kael is also transgender is exciting.”

“Manitoba is certainly ready for a transgender judge.”

Mackintosh said that according to the Manitoba Bar Association, McKenzie is the first known transgender judge in Canada.

A news release from the Manitoba government notes that McKenzie served in the Canadian Forces, and has volunteered for organizations including the Canadian Bar Association, the Manitoba Bar Association, the Winnipeg Folk Festival, the North American Indigenous Games and Winnipeg’s Rainbow Resource Centre.

The release said McKenzie was selected from a list of candidates recommended by an independent judicial nominating committee, chaired by Chief Judge Ken Champagne.

Mackintosh, who was also attorney general back when legislation was changed to require consideration of diversity for the bench, said the change recognized the provincial bench wasn’t reflecting the face of Manitoba and needed to be strengthened.

“That elevates the status of the court and its credibility among citizens, but it also strengthens insights that are available to the court,” Mackintosh said.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/12/21/manitoba-appoints-first-transgender-judge.html>

## **Miss Universe Canada's totem pole dress shocks First Nations people**

**Torontonian Paola Nunuz Valdez wore the offending dress at this week’s Miss Universe contest**



Miss Universe Canada's dress appears to be based on West Coast totem pole designs.  
(Missuniversecanadaofficial/Instagram)

In a tale of two pageants, First Nations people have gone from being proud to outraged.

In August, Ashley Callingbull, a 25-year-old from Alberta's Enoch Cree Nation, won the Mrs. Universe contest. Callingbull said she hoped her win would be a blow to stereotypes about aboriginal contestants and encourage other First Nations women to participate in contests.

But this week, Paola Nunuz Valdez, a Torontonion of Dominican descent competing as Canada's contestant at the Miss Universe pageant in Las Vegas last week, was scorned by many for wearing a dress that depicted a totem pole, similar to those found on Canada's West Coast.

"Totem Goddess," her Instagram post of the outfit said.

"Miss Canada on the Miss Universe stage beautifully embracing her ethnic culture."

Photos of the dress — essentially a bikini adorned with plumes of black feathers, a headdress and the totem pole as long as the beauty queen's legs — were quickly met with backlash after being posted online.

"As a Canadian First Nations, I sincerely hope you don't win. Your national costume is disgusting and disgrace to all Indigenous people," said a comment from Susie Caggiano on the contestant's Facebook page, one of dozens of messages decrying the outfit.

"This does not help First Nations people in Canada. I have a daughter who is First Nations and also does beauty pageants," Bernice Albert said on the same page.

"When she saw this 'costume,' she was angered."

## **Dominican heritage**

In a statement, Valdez said the dress was a "misunderstanding" and that the design was meant to refer to her own heritage as a Dominican, not to reflect on Canada's aboriginal culture.

She was born in the Dominican Republic, which shares with Haiti the large Caribbean island east of Cuba. While totem poles may exist there, they don't play as prominent role in the culture as they do on Canada's west coast.

Callingbull, in a Facebook post, suggested Miss Universe Canada hire a cultural consultant in the future to avoid hanging an important symbol from a future contestant's crotch.

She also criticized the organization's attempt to cover up its error.

"I'd like to see these so called 'west coast Dominican Republic Totem Poles.' They are really trying to protect themselves and didn't even have the heart to simply apologize," she wrote.

The dress was worn for part of the contest in Las Vegas, where the contestants model outfits based on their country's history. Earlier this year, Miss Universe Canada Chanel Beckenlehner wore a dress featuring 11 hockey sticks, elbow pads and a hat in the shape of the Stanley Cup at one contest.

Nunuz Valdez didn't win the Miss Universe contest. That honour went to Miss Philippines — though not before host **Steve Harvey wrongly announced** that Miss Colombia had won the prize.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/totem-pole-dress-1.3376366>

## **Aboriginal Politics**

### **Chief Wallace Fox a no-show to first appearance**

By [James Wood](#), Meridian Booster  
Thursday, December 17, 2015 4:07:36 MST PM



Judge Kim Young speaks to an agent for the lawyer of Onion Lake Cree Nation Chief Wallace Fox via teleconference during a session of court held in Onion Lake on Dec.16, 2015. Photo by James Wood Meridian Booster

Chief Wallace Fox did not appear in person for his first court date in Onion Lake Cree Nation.

Fox was charged earlier in the year with two counts of assault, one count of possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose related to the use of a knife and one count of uttering threats to damage property. The first court date for these charges, which remain unproven, was Wednesday, Dec. 16, 2015.

The session of court was held in the Onion Lake courthouse, which is housed in a small brown building close to the main centre of the reserve. As the court is a circuit point, the Saskatchewan court from Lloydminster headed north to handle matters, with Judge Kim Young presiding.

After taking care of routine ticket matters, Young heard an agent by the name of Praveen Alvis appearing via teleconference on behalf of Fox's lawyer, Robert Hladun.

During the short conversation, it was decided by Young for the matter to be adjourned to Jan 20, 2016, and indicated by the Crown Prosecution that the charges against Fox will be pursued with summary procedure, instead of procedure for an indictable offense.

The case will stay within the Onion Lake courthouse.

According to the Indian Act, any conviction resulting from summary procedure will not result in the stepping down of a chief or councilor. The only conviction which could result in this outcome would be an indictable offense.

"It's an election that the crown has," said Tanner Daniels, a crown prosecutor.

“In this case, the jurisdiction belongs in the provincial court, which is this courthouse here, and in this situation here it means there is a six month maximum custody that goes with it.”

Daniels said summary convictions are generally reserved for less serious offenses, and would not comment on any specifics as to the reasoning behind the decision to go for summary rather than indictable.

“At this point in time, it would be inappropriate to comment on anything too specific, as it is before the case, but that’s about all I can really get into,” said Daniels.

Corporeal Lynn Gaudet of the Onion Lake RCMP said she has not seen much reaction in the community to the charges or the case, and would not comment on any specific reason for why the charges against Fox took the time they did to be laid.

“I haven’t seen anything, actually, and nothing today, it’s been a fairly normal court day,” said Gaudet.

“I can’t speak on behalf of the investigating member, but sometimes there just are more things, and the Crown needs to review things as they go ahead. It just depends on the investigation.”

As previously reported by the Aboriginal People’s Television Network, the RCMP are looking in to how the Onion Lake detachment handled the complaints against Fox.

In contrast to Gaudet, Janet Trottier, band member and the director of Native Justice Inc. in Onion Lake said residents have been discussing the case.

“People are talking now,” said Trottier.

“Yes, some of it is negative, some of it is positive, but I think at the end of the day the important thing is that people are talking about it.”

Trottier, who previously wrote a letter to chief and council asking for Fox to step down, said she was not surprised by the Crown pursuing summary conviction in the case.

“I think it’s really clear in our country that we have really poor protection laws,” said Trottier.

“I knew that was something that could happen, and I’ve seen it, day in and day out. We have court every first and third Wednesday of every month, and you see that our assault charges have increased in the past year, and many of them are free with a slap on the wrist. Nothing is ever done. So it didn’t surprise me.”

The *Booster* reached out to Robert Hladun, who confirmed it would be his firm which would be defending Fox. Hladun also said Fox was paying for their services on his own.

“Just at these initial stages, I’m overseeing it, but of course he is paying, and it’s confidential whether he is or isn’t, but he is,” said Hladun.

As to who the exact lawyer from the firm will be who will be defending Fox, Hladun said there was no one selected as of yet.

“I don’t know, we haven’t gotten that far yet,” said Hladun.

Hladun also said he sees no issue with Fox using the firm to defend himself from the charges currently levelled at him, after he represented Onion Lake Cree Nation in their challenge against the federal government.

“I can’t see why there should be a problem when one thing has nothing to do with the other,” said Hladun.

Hladun also would not comment as to whether or not Fox will be appearing in the courtroom in person, and said he should defend himself from the charges.

Trottier said she still hopes Fox will step down.

“To me it always goes back to our fundamental values, and how much we cherish those, as an individual and how you present that to the community,” said Trottier.

“As a leader, any leader, not just in First Nations communities, any leader across the world would have that mentality, and that value base to be able to say ‘I think I need to step down’, but not in this case. No one has really asked him to do that. No one has ever asked him, or ever confronted him on his actions, or anything that he has ever done. It’s almost like everybody got too comfortable.”

Band leadership refused to provide comment on this story.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.meridianbooster.com/2015/12/17/chief-wallace-fox-a-no-show-to-first-appearance>

## **Increasing Co-operation Between Governments and First Nations**



A three part conference series is looking at the partnerships between the FSIN and both federal and provincial governments, along with cities across Saskatchewan.

A number of First Nations people and various levels of government gathered in Saskatoon to discuss land claims in the province, focusing on the basics of reserve creation, maximizing money when buying properties, and working together on regional development.

Second Vice Chief of the FSIN Robert Merasty says the next two forums will target developing urban reserves, and economic and business development.

Merasty says they hope by the end of the final conference in February the federal government may look more into policy change under the Indian Act, specifically how First Nations lands are used for economic development and the control that First Nations communities have over their lands.

On the provincial level, Merasty hopes the FSIN and the government can work together and discuss development of First Nations communities.

Director of Aboriginal Relations for the City of Saskatoon Gilles Dorval says if the city wants to move forward, more Aboriginal people need to be involved in the economic landscape of the region. Dorval believes the conference can create awareness for both sides who are looking to buy on-reserve land or expand First Nations businesses into Saskatoon.

Merasty believes it's the first time major cities, provincial and federal governments, universities and First Nations have been able to sit at the table and discuss on-reserve business development.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.saskatoonhomepage.ca/news/local-news/71004-increasing-co-operation-between-governments-and-first-nations>

## **talks back down on First Nations**

BY ANTHONY FUREY, POSTMEDIA NETWORK

FIRST POSTED: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2015 03:08 PM EST |

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Canada's Indigenous Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett speaks during Question Period in the House of Commons on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Canada, December 8, 2015. REUTERS/Chris Wattie

The Liberals just pressed pause on a law requiring First Nations politicians to disclose their salaries. This sends the message that the government sides more with aboriginal power-brokers than the average people on reserves.

"Make no mistake, the only First Nations who benefit from a toothless First Nations Financial Transparency Act (FNFTA) are the politicians, not average First Nations people," Aaron Wudrick, federal director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation said via email.

On Friday, Indigenous Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett revealed the government will drop legal action and stop withholding funds to any First Nation that didn't comply with the FNFTA.

The act mandated band councils provide financial statements, which were then posted online for all to see. The Liberals are now reviewing the whole law. Maybe they'll change it. Maybe they'll scrap it.

This would be a shame. A key way to guaranteeing politicians serve their constituents well is by empowering their constituents with information so they can hold their governments to account.

Because of this act, First Nations members learned a lot about their leaders. Some members of the small Kwikwetlem First Nation in British Columbia even announced they were launching a lawsuit against Chief Ron Giesbrecht after learning he received a whopping \$914,219 in compensation in 2013.

The controversial law, which was brought in by the Stephen Harper government in 2013, was opposed by a number of chiefs at the time. Bennett called it "racist" when she was Liberal critic for the post.

However, it was inspired by average First Nations residents who weren't being given this information when they requested it.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation got wind of their complaints and started lobbying on their behalf. Their efforts led to this act.

Plus, according to the indigenous affairs website so far more than 90% of First Nations have disclosed information for the latest fiscal year. The FNFTA is clearly a success. Why nix something that's working?

"This government has been shouting from the rooftops that it stands for transparency and accountability," Wudrick also wrote, "and yet one of its first acts is to stop enforcing a law that has been the single most important tool First Nations band members have had to hold their leaders to account."

Conservative indigenous affairs critic Cathy McLeod tweeted: "They cannot justify keeping basic information away from community members!"

Governments in Canada are increasingly moving towards "open source" measures like this. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau himself has said he supports more open government.

However, he also campaigned on retracting First Nations legislation put in place by the Harper government that the aboriginal community opposes. But does he mean laws opposed by aboriginal leadership or by regular people on the reserves? It's an important distinction. The answer is unclear.

Trudeau has repeatedly stressed he wants to rebuild a "nation-to-nation" relationship with First Nations. It sounds inclusive at first. But nation-to-nation conversations are conducted at the top level. The average person isn't consulted. They're shut out from the process.

It's a shame that a measure that empowered average people on reserves looks to be the first one the Liberals have put on the chopping block.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.torontosun.com/2015/12/18/liberals-back-down-on-first-nations-transparency>

## No magic bullet solution for aboriginal problems

**BY** SARA MACINTYR *POSTMEDIA NETWORK*

FIRST POSTED: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2015 06:28 PM EST |

UPDATED: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2015 06:35 PM EST

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Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (2nd R) is presented with an copy the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report by Commissioner Marie Wilson (L), Commissioner Chief Wilton Littlechild (2nd L) and Justice Murray Sinclair in Ottawa, Canada, December 15, 2015. Trudeau pledged to work toward full reconciliation with Canadian Aboriginals on Tuesday as he accepted a final report on the abuses of the government's now-defunct system of residential schools for indigenous children. REUTERS/Chris Wattle

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission filed its final report this week, detailing an awful but undeniable chapter in Canada's history. Justice Murray Sinclair and Commissioners Chief Wilton Littlechild and Marie Wilson spent the past six years

touring the country and hearing testimony from more than 6,000 residential school survivors who were abused and the heartbreaking legacy of a failed, antiquated and shameful policy.

Our new Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau promises to chart a path to “true reconciliation” and has already met with the leaders of five national Aboriginal groups. There seems to be a euphoria of good will and intentions. I remember a similar sentiment with the reporting of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in 1996.

It was also some 4,000 pages with six chapters, 440 recommendations and “set out a 20-year agenda for implementing changes.” The RCAP met for five years, the longest royal commission ever, cost some \$60 million and according to the mother-corp, CBC “as far as significant impact into government action goes, the royal commission on aboriginals pretty well sank like a stone.”

I harken back to the RCAP not to be trite or condemn the utility of inquiries or commissions but rather to recall the pattern of promise and let down that characterizes and mires the relationship between Aboriginal groups and the federal government.

Often times we are looking for a magic bullet solution, whether that be with Aboriginal poverty, education rates, incarceration levels, marital breakdown, substance abuse, socio-economic disadvantage and now with missing and murdered Aboriginal women. There seems to be an assumption that if we get smart enough people together with an army of researchers and witnesses that we will unearth a magic solution that has been waiting to be found.

It’s a childlike optimism that seems to infect governments on a cyclical basis. Here’s the newsflash: there’s no magic bullet, no wonderland, no one fix to the myriad of social dysfunction that disproportionately afflicts Aboriginal people in our country. But promising to look and failing to provide only continues the cycle of distrust, disappointment and exhaustion.

We need to have an honest conversation if we are to address some of the endemic issues that plague Aboriginals in Canada. Let’s start with some statistics and facts, the RCMP released a report, “Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: 2015 Update to the National Operational Overview” and found “homicides of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women had similar solve rates of 81% and 83%. RCMP homicide data from 2013 and 2014 shows a strong nexus to family violence. Female victims, regardless of ethnicity, are most frequently killed by men within their own homes and communities. As of April 2015, for all police jurisdictions in Canada, there were 174 missing Aboriginal female cases. This represents 10% of the 1,750 missing females reported on the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC).”

Let me be clear I wholeheartedly believe there is a massive problem for Aboriginal women in Canada: they are disproportionately represented in our most vulnerable populations without voice, help and support in their communities.

How many national Aboriginal leaders are women? Why do so many Aboriginal women find themselves on the margins of society? How can we address that problem?

**Direct Link:** <http://www.torontosun.com/2015/12/17/no-magic-bullet-solution-to-aboriginal-problems>

## Aboriginal Sports

### **B.C. unveils medal to celebrate young aboriginal athletes**

RICHARD WATTS / TIMES COLONIST  
DECEMBER 18, 2015 06:00 AM

When Alex Nelson was in residential school in Alert Bay, there was one spot he felt at home and free to be himself — the soccer pitch.

“To get away from that building, that institution, the staff, the smell, the whole shebang, the one grace I had was always the soccer field,” Nelson said Thursday. “It allowed me a freedom to just be outside with that soccer ball and with my teammates.”

Nelson lives in Victoria and at the age of 69 still plays on senior men’s teams. But his real passion is coaching young people, with a special fondness for teaching young aboriginal people.

He was thrilled with an announcement Thursday from the provincial Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development for a new medal to honour outstanding young aboriginal people.

It’s to be called the Premier’s Award for Aboriginal Youth Excellence in Sport. It will be awarded to 12 people under 25, six men and six women, at the 2016 Gathering Our Voices event in Victoria, March 21-24.

Working with the B.C. Association of Native Friendship Centres, the First Nations Health Authority and Métis Nation B.C., the medal criteria were established to honour achievement in sport, leadership and community commitment.

Nelson’s cultural home is with the people of Musgamaqw-Dzawada’enuxw of Kingcome Inlet on the B.C. Mainland. He assisted in establishing the criteria and is especially proud it will honour the whole person, not just the athlete.

“It really tries to honour the holistic well-being of a person, those people who are also academic achievers, community connected and culturally driven,” Nelson said.

“And I really love that it will be recognized at a provincial youth gathering,” he said. “When you can get honoured among your own peers, it really adds something.”

Nelson agreed young aboriginal athletes can have a tough time taking full advantage of the benefits sports can bring.

Leaving home with a scholarship or even to pursue a pro career can be an enormous culture shock when you are from a small community with a unique culture and a heavy emphasis on family.

But Nelson also said First Nations home and community can always help, even those members who leave.

For example, he has two nephews from Alert Bay area who went far with soccer, one who joined the Winnipeg Fury and one who played in England and returned to play with the Vancouver Island Vistas.

“And when they are away, they phone home as much as they can,” Nelson said. “When they come home, we celebrate and we do it in a cultural way and that gives them a sense of belonging.

“I use the word ‘spirit,’ and for me it means a real strong connection,” he said. “Young people can take the spirit of our people, of their family and community, and they can take it with them and it will keep them grounded.”

See more at: <http://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/b-c-unveils-medal-to-celebrate-young-aboriginal-athletes-1.2135966#sthash.5S6CBInW.dpuf>

## Energy, the Environment & Natural Resources

### Arctic missing from Paris climate agreement

By [Eilís Quinn, Eye on the Arctic](#)

Friday 18 December, 2015



While the United Nations climate change agreement was praised when it was reached this month, the omission of the word ‘Arctic’ from the final agreement, and the lack of discussion around Arctic warming at the conference, has many northern indigenous leaders concerned.



“Polar bears aren’t the spokespeople for climate change in the Arctic, it’s the Peoples of the Arctic,” said Okalik Egeesiak, Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC). “So stop using polar bears and seals as the emotional icon and use Inuit as fact-based traditional knowledge holders.” (Courtesy ICC)

“(The agreement) was historic, yes,” said Okalik Egeesiak, chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), the organization that represents the world’s approximately 155,000 Inuit living in Canada, Greenland, Russia and the United States.

“(But) Inuit and Saami peoples wanted to have more recognition and respect for Arctic peoples,” she said in a phone interview. “There is some mention of indigenous peoples and our rights and our role in climate change (issues) but there isn’t much commitment to work with us.”

Josefina Skerk, vice-president of Sweden’s Saami parliament, agrees.

“The agreement was received with disappointment from the Saami leaders,” Skerk said in a phone interview from northern Sweden.

“If we are to find a way out of this climate change disaster that we are living through right now, I think it’s crucial to do it through respect and finding a new way; not the path that led us here to where we are. The respect for each other and each other’s knowledge will be key elements in that.”

### **‘Arctic communities are developing communities’**

The Arctic is warming twice as fast as other global regions and has long been held up as a symbol of global warming.

But northern indigenous peoples and experts have noticed the region all but disappears when it comes to international climate negotiations. And this, despite the fact that

the majority of the world's Arctic communities face similar challenges to developing nations when it comes to the negative effects of climate change on infrastructure, economies and cultures.

“For some reason everything was so silent about the Arctic during the negotiations,” said Skerk. “And we saw a very weak outcome in the document on indigenous rights for example.”

And while developed countries, including Canada, pledged funds in Paris to help developing nations with climate adaptation and mitigation, similar pledges were not made for Arctic communities.

“We keep reminding our respective governments that Inuit, Saami and northern indigenous Peoples should be considered underdeveloped communities,” Eegeesiak said. “We will be going after the funds that were announced as well.”

Listen to our **Eye on the Arctic** conversation with **Okalik Eegeesiak, chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council:**  
[Listen](#)

### **Role of indigenous rights plays in fighting climate change**

While the COP21 agreement lays out a framework, it's up to individual states to implement it on a national level.

ICC issued a position paper on COP21 where it called on global leaders to, among other things, include Inuit at all levels of climate discussions and programs whether regional, national and international.

Not including Arctic indigenous leaders in decisions around climate mitigation strategies and green energy projects has already had dire consequences for some northern European communities.



“It would be a terrible thing if a question that unites us like the struggle against climate change would be the tipping point for actually eradicating indigenous culture,” says Josefine Skerf, vice-president of Sweden’s Saami parliament.

The Saami are an Arctic indigenous People whose traditional homeland, Sapmi, straddles Arctic Norway, Finland, Sweden and northwestern Russia. They were traditionally semi-nomadic reindeer herders. There are an estimated 80,000 Saami living in northern Europe today.

Skerf says there are already numerous examples of governments making so-called ‘green’ decisions that have devastated Saami communities and culture.

“We suffer both from climate change and mitigation (to stop it),” Skerf said.

Wind parks have been installed on traditional lands in parts of Arctic Europe like Norway and Sweden without consulting local Saami populations. Some of these parks have not only destroyed reindeer habitat but caused financial and mental health issues among the reindeer herders who can no longer continue their livelihood as before.

“It would be a terrible thing if a question that unites us like the struggle against climate change would be the tipping point for actually eradicating indigenous culture,” Skerf said. “We already see people forced out of their traditional livelihoods that they have been doing for generations because of mitigation efforts like windmills and windpower.”

“The risk is, of course, when we aren’t at the table, when we can’t tell our perspectives or be a part of the decisions, is that when political leaders in our states, our countries make decisions that perhaps protect their future generations, they are at the same, destroying the future for ours.”

### **‘Polar bears aren’t spokespeople for Arctic’**

Egeesvik says this is an issue indigenous Peoples continue to face and that consultation is not enough; the perspectives and realities of Arctic People’s must be integrated fully into policy, whether in the areas of climate mitigation or northern development.

Nowhere is this more important than in the Arctic, an area where polar bears are the dominant image used to illustrate media reports on climate change in the North- rather than the people that live there.

“Polar bears aren’t the spokespeople for climate change in the Arctic, it’s the Peoples of the Arctic,” said Egeesvik. “So stop using polar bears and seals as the emotional icon and use Inuit as fact-based traditional knowledge holders.”

Doing otherwise not only hurts the survival of indigenous peoples and cultures, but excludes the thousands of years of environmental knowledge that northern peoples have of their lands and regions – knowledge that the international and scientific community need more than ever in order to develop successful climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, Skerk said.

“(Respect) the people that have lived on the lands and waters for thousands of years and actually know it, and know it like like you would know a family member,” she said. “The respect of that knowledge will be key I think in finding a way forward (on climate change). And that is especially true for the Arctic.”

**Direct Link:** <http://www.rcinet.ca/en/2015/12/18/arctic-missing-from-paris-climate-agreement/>

## First Nations role in caribou future urged

**BOB WEBER THE CANADIAN PRESS**

**Published** December 17, 2015 - 9:10pm



A Woodland caribou bull walks through a field near Torngats. (THE CANADIAN PRESS) CP

EDMONTON — If Canada is serious about reconciliation with First Nations, a new study suggests that giving them a greater voice in caribou conservation might be a good place to start.

The Boreal Leadership Council — made up of First Nations, business leaders and environmental groups — released a study Thursday that concludes having indigenous people on board makes a big difference to conservation programs.

And, said report author Valerie Courtois, the cultural value of caribou could make the animals a powerful way to bring indigenous and mainstream society together.

“Recognition of the role and responsibility of indigenous people towards caribou is a recognition of culture,” said Courtois. “It’s a much healthier place to start from in seeking reconciliation than one of non-recognition.”

A recent survey of boreal caribou across the country graded efforts to conserve the shrinking herds to be mediocre at best.

While a few provinces have made positive moves, the report from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society found the amount of protected habitat for the animals increased only one per cent, despite federal requirements.

But Courtois' survey says conservation programs rooted in indigenous communities have big advantages over those that aren't.

Elders or hunters frequently on the land can provide early warnings of changes before they show up in formal surveys. Indigenous-led programs were often more flexible in adjusting to changes, the survey found.

First Nations can also provide extra capacity to provincial environmental agencies that have had budget cuts. And the commitment of indigenous people to maintaining caribou — especially if traditional knowledge is incorporated into recovery plans — helps ensure best practices.

And First Nations have the benefit of long experience with an animal whose numbers have gone through large swings over the decades.

“We’ve got people who are present and can notice trends and changes over long periods of time.”

Some bands, such as the Athabasca Chipewyan in Alberta or B.C.’s West Moberly, are already playing a significant role in caribou conservation, said Courtois. But most such plans are still run by bureaucrats, she said.

“The norm for recovery planning is that it is led by provincial recovery teams. Many First Nations have had a dissatisfying experience with that process because it’s been mostly framed around western science.”

Courtois said the type of habitat frequented by woodland caribou is also ground zero for large resource developments. That makes caribou recovery a complicated task — but it’s also where different groups in society can meet to work together.

“Caribou is one of those things that can really show the impacts of leadership,” Courtois said. “As we started looking across the country, we started noticing that there’s some real innovative stuff coming out of First Nations.”

**Direct Link:** <http://thechronicleherald.ca/canada/1328188-first-nations-role-in-caribou-future-urged>

# Watch Climate Change Eat This Canadian Island

Written by JON CHRISTIAN

December 20, 2015 // 03:00 PM EST

The waterbound Pacific nation of Kiribati isn't the only island that's being swallowed by the ocean. A new video by National Geographic shows the rising Atlantic eating away at the low-lying Lennox Island, an aboriginal community in Prince Edward Island province that's also threatened by the rising seas.

“When I first came to live here, we had the children out playing baseball in the front yard,” said David Haley, a property manager who lives on the island, in the clip. “They can’t do that anymore. That land is gone.”

The short video cuts between residents of the island, who mourn the loss of what Haley said has been up to three feet of land per year, and gorgeous, snow-dusted shots of the shore and its shifting border with the water. In addition the loss of land, the island’s occupants—many of whom are members of the Lennox Island First Nation—have dealt with washouts, erosion, basement flooding and damage to the roadways.

As global warming starts to have more and more dramatically tangible effects on the Earth, coastal and island towns face the prospect of being swept away. Recently, a faux real estate company called Higher Tides was even created, “claiming to sell undervalued real estate that will increase in value as climate change causes cities from New York to Miami to eventually slip beneath the rising sea.” The project was satire, but it fooled a lot of people—hopefully highlighting that sea-level rise is a very real and urgent concern.

But nothing is quite as powerful as seeing the faces and hearing the stories of people whose entire communities and livelihoods are at risk. The world is slowly waking up to the threat of global warming, but so far it’s too little, too late.

**Direct Link:** <http://motherboard.vice.com/read/watch-climate-change-eat-this-canadian-island>

## Sooke RCMP investigating illegal asbestos dumping on Beecher Bay First Nations land

**Up to 55 bags of asbestos-laden linoleum have been dumped in the past two months**

[CBC News](#) Posted: Dec 22, 2015 8:29 PM PT Last Updated: Dec 22, 2015 9:02 PM PT



Sooke RCMP first received a call about 30 to 50 bags of illegal waste on Oct. 30. (Sooke RCMP)

RCMP in Sooke, B.C., are investigating the illegal dumping of what they say appears to be asbestos waste on Beecher Bay First Nations land on Vancouver Island.

"It's hazardous waste, it's very expensive to get rid of it properly," said Staff Sgt. Jeff McArthur.

"Clearly someone is trying to save money and discard this at the roadside, endangering the environment and the public."

RCMP say the waste was dumped on two separate occasions — once on Oct. 30, and again on Nov. 26 — totaling up to 55 large garbage bags.

"Clearly the bags of asbestos were professionally removed and sent for disposal," said McArthur in a written release.



Does this linoleum look familiar? If it does, Sooke RCMP want to speak to you. (Sooke RCMP)

Police have released images of some of the waste, hoping someone will recognize the unique pattern of the linoleum and provide information that could lead to an arrest.

They also have analyzed the bags and their contents.

"We have picked some things out that we think are kind of distinctive and may tell us where the waste has come from," McArthur said.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Sooke RCMP at 250-642-5241 or Crimestoppers at 1-800-222-8477.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/illegal-asbestos-dumping-vancouver-island-1.3377699>

## Land Claims & Treaty Rights

### **Decades-old fight against Kouchibouguac National Park expropriation goes to federal court**

By Richard Dooley Global News, December 17, 2015 12:51 pm



Kouchibouguac National Park sign is seen here in this undated photo.

File/Global News

MONCTON – A battle against the expropriation of land that began in the 1970s is headed to the Federal Court in Ottawa, headed by the man who's name is synonymous with the fight against Kouchibouguac National Park.

Jackie Vautour has started a law suit in federal court alleging the federal government failed to consult with indigenous people, Metis and Acadians when the land was expropriated to form the park.

The law suit was filed in Ottawa on Monday.

Vautour filed the suit on his own behalf, and on behalf of a long list of plaintiffs identifying themselves as indigenous residents of Kouchibouguac territory, Stephen Augustine, hereditary Mi'kmaq Chief and the Mi'kmaq people of the area.

The statement of claim filed to the court alleges that Metis, Acadian and Mi'kmaq people of what is known as the Sigenigteouk district retain hunting, fishing and trapping rights to the area now occupied by the national park.

The statement also claims Kouchibouguac is traditional indigenous land and not Crown land as defined in the National Parks Act with title falling to indigenous groups first.

The lawsuit is seeking damages for infringing on that title and for the removal of families who once lived in the area.

Vautour has contested the national park for decades in an often public and bitter fight with the federal government.

His land was expropriated but he's lived in a small trailer in the park for years despite several orders to leave.

The federal government has 30 days to file a response with the federal court to the statement of claim .

**Direct Link:** <http://globalnews.ca/news/2406913/decades-old-fight-against-kouchibouguac-national-park-expropriation-goes-to-federal-court/>

## **Tears are fine, but will Trudeau respect Indigenous rights to resources?**

BY **KARL NERENBERG**  
| DECEMBER 18, 2015



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau deserves full marks for his reaction to the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on residential schools.

Indigenous Canadians can now hope that the new federal government will show them genuine respect.

The previous prime minister apologized for the residential schools. But he then adopted a negative and confrontational approach in dealings with Canada's first peoples.

The tone has now definitely changed.

Having said that, we cannot forget that the challenges of Indigenous Canada do not begin and end with the residential schools and their horrific consequences.

It will, of course, be important to implement the Commission's calls to action. Prime Minister Trudeau has solemnly promised he will implement each and every one of those calls.

And they go well beyond the residential school system itself. They deal with broader matters such as funding for First Nations education, Indigenous child welfare, health services and the justice system.

It is notable, though, that on economic matters the TRC has little to say, aside from calling for the full agreement of Indigenous communities before allowing resource development on their lands.

### **Indigenous rights to natural resources and economic power**

But the issues of economic power and economic rights are at the heart of Canada's relationship with its Indigenous peoples.

At the height of the Idle No More movement, a little more than two years ago, when then Prime Minister Stephen Harper allowed himself to be drawn into a Crown-First Nations summit, there was much talk about Indigenous ownership and control of natural resources.

Harper dismissed all that.

Natural resources, under our constitution, belong to the provinces, the Conservative leader said. He told Indigenous leaders: If you think you have any right to those resources, don't bother me, go talk to the provinces.

Good luck with that.

The fact is that for decades now the control of natural resources and the tools for economic self-sufficiency have been the twin elephants in the room whenever we talk about Indigenous Canada.

Apologies and tears are fine, but they are not the final answer.

As a country, if we are serious about genuinely improving the living conditions and respecting the rights of Indigenous Canadians we will have to take economic development seriously.

Nearly 20 years ago, another Commission whose work resulted in a massive report made that point very well.

That was the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, headed by former Assembly of First Nations National Chief George Erasmus and Quebec Judge René Dussault.

The Royal Commission's detailed recommendations still bear reading today.

Policy makers and politicians of all stripes have systematically ignored what Erasmus and Dussault had to say almost from the moment they published their findings in 1996.

Here, just to cite one small example, is part of what the Royal Commission said on the question of economic development. It is as true today as it was in 1996:

"As things stand, Aboriginal communities are subject to a changing array of economic development programs, most of them managed from distant government offices. They must tailor their ideas for stimulating the economy to program criteria set by external authorities.

We call on federal and provincial governments to enter into long-term development agreements with Aboriginal nations to provide support, advice and stable funding for

economic development. Aboriginal nations would design programs, make investment decisions, and be accountable to their people for managing these resources. Regaining control of economic matters without the human resources and capacity to manage them would spell trouble for Aboriginal nations. They must be helped to develop the personnel and the regional and national institutions they need to invest in and manage businesses in specific sectors -- resource extraction industries, agriculture, communications, tourism, and so on."

**Direct Link:** <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/karl-nerenberg/2015/12/tears-are-fine-will-trudeau-respect-indigenous-rights-to-resou>

## **First Nations activists ask politicians to block Zibi project in spirit of reconciliation**

EVAN PRZESIECKI, OTTAWA CITIZEN

**Published on: December 19, 2015 | Last Updated: December 20, 2015 5:37 PM EST**



Algonquin community activist Albert 'South Wind' Dumont addresses a meeting to discuss the Zibi project on Saturday, Dec. 19. EVAN PRZSIECKI / OTTAWA CITIZEN

Members of First Nations communities gathered on Saturday to ask federal political leaders to respect the sacredness of the unceded Algonquin land and stop the controversial Zibi multi-use development at Chaudiere Falls, in the spirit of reconciliation.

"You hear this word quite a lot: Reconciliation. What does that really mean?" Peter Di Gangi, research and policy director at the Algonquin Nation Secretariat, told about 100 people at Southminster United Church.

“It’s easy for something to become a catchword, but when you really think what reconciliation means and what needs to be done at this time, the islands at Chaudiere Falls are an example of what could happen. Let’s stop, step back and think about what really needs to be done given the history of those islands and their meaning.”

Windmill Development Group has billed its \$1.2-billion project of condos and retail buildings on the abandoned industrial Chaudiere and Albert islands as one of the most sustainable communities in the world.

The developer has also pledged collaboration with the Algonquin-Anishabee communities, including a quota for Algonquin workers as well as trilingual signs in English, French and Algonquin.

Nevertheless, members of some Algonquin communities believe that the development is taking away the sacredness of the land.

“It’s not fun and games. It’s a serious thing, spirituality,” said Algonquin community activist, Albert “South Wind” Dumont.

Douglas Cardinal, the architect who designed the Canadian Museum of History, believes in keeping the falls as an eco-park that respects renowned Algonquin elder William Commanda’s vision to return the falls to their natural state.

“It’s a question: a billion-dollar development or Indigenous rights?” said Cardinal. “The Windmill project is a sacrilege to our people, our ceremonies and our way of being. They have no right to be on those islands.”

Some activists proposed alternatives to the location. Singer-songwriter and member of Free the Falls Julie Comber believes that relocating “Zibi” to LeBreton Flats would create even more benefits for Windmill and would leave the islands untouched.

“We’re arguing that they could just move over there,” said Comber. “It would be right by the Pimisi light rail station and these new homeowners would be right next to public transport, so that’s great.”

A petition from Free the Falls to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has gathered 4,500 signatures from people wanting to make the islands a public rather than private space. The event on Saturday was part of the Phil Ochs Festival, which had musical performances alongside a panel discussion on protecting the unceded Algonquin land. Ochs was a political folksinger notable for social activism through song.

**Direct Link:** <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/first-nations-activists-ask-politicians-to-protect-islands-in-spirit-of-reconciliation>

## **Ross River Dena Council to appeal hunting licence court decision**

## Dena Council appealing late November decision, where judge said gov't already adequately consulting

[CBC News](#) Posted: Dec 21, 2015 8:34 AM CT Last Updated: Dec 21, 2015 8:34 AM CT



Gord Zealand, the executive director of the Yukon Fish and Game Association, said in November that Justice Ron Veale's ruling is a 'victory for wildlife.' He's concerned about the appeal: 'If you got a decision where something was different, well what does that mean for wildlife management in the Yukon?' (Vic Istchenko/CBC)

Yukon's Ross River Dena Council is appealing **a recent Yukon Supreme Court ruling** denying them a say in how hunting licences are issued in their traditional territory.

In late November, Yukon Supreme Court Justice Ron Veale ruled against the Dena Council, saying that the Yukon Government has "made continuing and extensive efforts to consult RRDC about wildlife management in the Ross River Area."

The Dena Council argued that by permitting non-residents to hunt around their traditional territory in Ross River, they are not accommodating Kaska rights.

Gord Zealand, the executive director of the Yukon Fish and Game Association, was an intervener in the case. He's concerned about the appeal, saying that Yukon First Nations already have input in how licences are issued through the territory's Fish and Wildlife Management Board.

"We would hope that that process would stay in place," said Zealand. "If you got a decision where something was different, well what does that mean for wildlife management in the Yukon?"

The appeal is expected to be heard when the territory's Court of Appeal convenes in the spring.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/ross-river-dena-appeal-1.3374373>

# Kelly Lake traplines ailing amid resource development

JONNY WAKEFIELD / ALASKA HIGHWAY NEWS  
DECEMBER 21, 2015 07:58 AM



Meat smokes at the Kelly Lake Cree Nation. The nation says the cumulative impacts of resource development have depleted their traditional traplines. Photo By Submitted

When Linette Calliou Hodges walks her family trapline, the scene is bleak.

"It's scarce right now," said Calliou Hodges, rights and title manager at the Kelly Lake Cree Nation. "The animals are moving, migrating elsewhere or they're just at-risk. They're not coming to the areas they've historically come to."

The nation says overlapping forestry, oil and gas and other resource development tenures have wreaked havoc on its eight family-owned traplines.

"It's not going to be a way of life for our people any longer because of the cumulative impacts," Calliou Hodges said.

On Nov. 25, the nation met with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources about logging in the area, saying it hadn't been adequately consulted.

Calliou Hodges said traplines have been in decline for around 30 years. Management of the lines has always been contentious. Her great-great grandfather was forced to register his trapping route with the government in the 1920s.

"So that's been in our family for at least five generations we know of," she said.

Beaver tends to be the most commonly trapped animal, she said, adding members have stopped trapping certain animals, including wolverine, after the nation carried out a study on at-risk species.

The impact of logging on trapping, an activity protected by treaty rights, has landed the B.C. government in hot water in the past.

In 2013, Fort Nelson First Nation member George Behn lost in the Supreme Court of Canada after non-violently blockading a timber parcel. Behn claimed he hadn't been adequately consulted after being told to remove his traps from the area set to be logged.

While the blockade didn't break any laws, the judge ruled against Behn's claim that the government was obligated to consult both the First Nation and himself as an individual trapline holder. The court ordered the province to pay \$1.75 million in damages to the timber company, saying it started the conflict in the first place by botching consultations with Fort Nelson First Nation.

Calliou Hodges said the province could be opening itself up to a legal challenge by failing to consult Kelly Lake.

"We're getting pretty fed up with the way the B.C. government is choosing not to consult with us," she said. "They see us, under their policy, as individual trapline holders. Collectively, when you look at it, we're not individual trapline holders. We're holding title to an area as a collective nation."

The 800-member Kelly Lake Cree Nation lies 80 kilometres south of Dawson Creek. Kelly Lake was not included in the treaty process and is not covered under the Indian Act, according to the band's website.

It is pursuing a land grievance against the federal government, laying claim to around 44,000-square kilometres of land from Jasper National Park to the Peace River.

- See more at: <http://www.alaskahighwaynews.ca/regional-news/kelly-lake-traplines-ailing-amid-resource-development-1.2137067#sthash.MTXnLruM.dpuf>

## **Chippewas of the Thames First Nation take their case to the Supreme Court of Canada**

BY KRYSTALLINE KRAUS

| DECEMBER 21, 2015



Citizens and members of First Nations have the right to demand that the National Energy Board respect the Aboriginal and Treaty Rights of the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation regarding pipeline energy projects criss-crossing their territories.

Without consultation with, and consent from, the Chippewas of the Thames, Enbridge Corporation does not have the right to pump potentially **dangerous oils through communities**. Other First Nations along the pipeline route deserve the same respect of true informed disclosure and consent along other First Nations in Southern Ontario and Quebec.

What is at stake here is the path that **Enbridge Corp. Line 9** is taking through southern Ontario and Quebec.

Chippewas of the Thames First Nation is currently seeking leave from the Supreme Court to appeal a decision of the Federal Court of Appeal which upheld a National Energy Board decision granting Enbridge Pipeline Inc.'s ("Enbridge") authorization to reverse a section of pipeline between North Westover, Ontario and Montreal, Quebec.

This would expand the annual capacity of the line from Sarnia, Ontario to Montreal from 240,000 bpd to 300,000 bpd, and to allow heavy crude, containing diluted bitumen, to be shipped along Line 9.

Yes, it is easy to quip that this pipeline already exists, but not in a reverse flow capacity. Another issue is the potential for accidents, and on whose territories the accidents could take place. And whose responsibility it is to declare an emergency and who would be responsible for cleaning it up.

Chippewas of the Thames First Nation have appeared before the National Energy Board and provided evidence of its existing Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in the vicinity of the pipeline project and potential risks associated with the new activity requested by Enbridge.

Informed consent is the positive operational standpoint when dealing with First Nations caught in the crosshairs of big business. This includes duty to consult even before ground is broken.

The duty to consult with First Nations people and accommodate their interests are in fact a constitutional duty invoking honour of the Crown, wherein it's required that the Crown act with good faith to provide meaningful consultation appropriate to the circumstances, and must be upheld.

We all know what "Good Faith" meant under the Conservative government under Stephen Harper. Hopefully, we will see something different under Liberal Party leader.



Justin Trudeau.

While his father had not always been allies with First Nations through his White Paper, there is hope that the younger Trudeau will manage Indigenous affairs in a different way. Not that the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation can function on hope. They have many supporters from each town or Nation that Enbridge Line 9 crosses.

This said, Enbridge is actively attempting to lobby to bypass the legal Court of Appeal in order to start pumping heavy oil through the aging pipeline built for light oil through eight First Nations, many of whom were not consulted on the reversal project, as required by the Canadian Constitution. And the National Energy Board, closely tied to the Harper government and Big Oil, is likely to let Enbridge get away with it.

This is why The Chippewas of the Thames First Nation are appealing the National Energy Board's approval the Line 9 reversal, and are going to The Supreme Court of Canada.

**Direct Link:** <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/krystalline-kraus/2015/12/chippewas-thames-first-nation-take-their-case-to-supreme-co>

## Protest camp set up on Peace River as Trudeau urged to stop Site C dam

BY **BRENT PATTERSON**  
| DECEMBER 23, 2015



Treaty 8 members and allies opposing the Site C dam have set up a protest camp at Rocky Mountain Fort on the Peace River.

Site C is a 60-metre high, 1,050-metre-long earth-filled dam and hydroelectric generation station being built on the Peace River between the communities of Hudson's Hope and Taylor on Treaty 8 territory in northeastern British Columbia. It will create an 83-kilometre-long reservoir and flood about 5,550 hectares of agricultural land southwest of Fort St. John. It will also submerge 78 First Nations heritage sites, including burial grounds and places of cultural and spiritual significance.

The *Alaska Highway News* **reports**, "As of December 14, it was not known how many people were living at the camp. ...The area is slated for clearing, which will take place through the first three months of 2016 [and] at some point, boat traffic will be restricted, making site access an issue... [Peace Valley Landowners Association activist Ken] Boon said it remains to be seen whether there will be a confrontation over the site. 'I guess we'll see,' he said. '[Hydro] keeps saying they're going to put [construction] buoys in, and I see they say that initially, boats will be able to pass through that area. So I guess we'll see what they decree.'"

Last week the *Globe and Mail* **reported**, "[West Moberly First Nations Chief Roland Wilson] went to Ottawa hoping for sit-down meetings with several ministers. When he couldn't get them, he walked into the [Liberal caucus] Christmas party... Mr. Willson asked the federal government to hit pause on [Site C] to allow time for a review of the assessment process and to look for alternative energy sources. With site preparation work already under way on the river, it might seem his trip to Ottawa came too late. But he's hoping Mr. Trudeau meant it when he wrote in his mandate letters to ministers: 'No relationship is more important to me and to Canada than the one with Indigenous Peoples.'"

That article adds that the prime minister has declared his government will implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. "[That] declaration requires states to consult with indigenous people 'in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources.' Mr. Wilson's message is that his people have not consented to Site C, which will flood 57,000 acres, drowning traditional hunting, fishing and trapping areas, and an unknown number of graves and sacred sites."

Just last month, Assembly of First Nations national chief Perry Bellegarde and Amnesty International secretary-general Alex Neve **wrote**, "These impacts are not in question. A federal-provincial environmental impact assessment concluded that the Site C dam would severely undermine the rights of Indigenous peoples. The review also concluded that this harm could never be undone. The Harper government decided that, despite this finding, the project was nonetheless 'justified' through cabinet-level decision making powers the government gave itself under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012."

Despite this and ongoing legal challenges against the dam, B.C. Hydro began construction on the dam this summer and has reportedly already spent \$423 million on the \$9-billion project. On Nov. 25, the Canadian Press **reported**, "[Chief Wilson] described the province's decision to carry on with construction as a 'standard tactic' used against opponents of infrastructure projects. 'They try and get as much done to go in front of the courts and say, 'Well look, we've spent all this money. You can't shut us down

now,' he said... 'I hope [the province] doesn't get too far involved because there's still a strong possibility we could get this project shut down.'"

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs has recently **stated**, "With no less than three court cases underway in which First Nations, farmers and others oppose federal and provincial approvals of Site C, the federal government can slow down or halt the project outright by simply refusing to issue permits that must be in place in order for major works in the river to proceed. Contractors for B.C. Hydro cannot divert water and place millions of tons of fill into the river without first obtaining permits from the Fisheries and Transportation ministries."

Grand Chief Phillip also highlights, "Treaty 8 nations challenged the Harper government's approval. The Federal Court rejected their arguments. The decision is now under appeal by the West Moberly and Prophet River First Nations, who are opposed in court by the federal government. [If the Trudeau government dropped its opposition to the appeal that] would signal that Canada's new government truly intends to do what it said it will: chart a new relationship with Canada's indigenous peoples, 'one built on trust, recognition and respect for rights.'"

There may be some hope for this. On Nov. 29, the *Globe and Mail* **reported**, "In [the prime minister's] mandate letter to Jody Wilson-Raybould, the first aboriginal person ever appointed justice minister, he calls for a review of the federal government's litigation strategy. 'This should include early decisions to end appeals or positions that are not consistent with our commitments, the Charter [of Rights and Freedoms] or our values,' Mr. Trudeau wrote. One of the things Ms. Wilson-Raybould will now have to review is the federal government's opposition to a Federal Court challenge by First Nations to Ottawa's approval of the Site C project."

**Direct Link:** <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/brent-patterson/2015/12/protest-camp-set-on-peace-river-trudeau-urged-to-stop-site-c->

## **Meet the Indigenous Occupiers Challenging Development on Canada's Lelu Island**

By **KJ Dakin**, December 23, 2015

*This article originally appeared on VICE Canada.*

Gumboots first, four men in bright red survival suits splashed into the 20-foot skiff. They were heading out to escort the liquified natural gas (LNG) surveyors off of Flora Bank.

Occupier Mathew Danes held a slim, black ghetto blaster above his head, the eagle tattoo on his right temple partly obscured by sweat-dampened hair. A Tribe Called Red's "**Burn Your Village to the Ground**" blasted at full volume, war drums pounding through the speakers as the crew barreled through the water. The boys were hooting and hollering, pumping themselves up, raising the blood and grinning through the spray-like air on this wet and rocky northern BC coast. These boys are ready to fight, ready to defend. They

are determined to prevent development of the proposed LNG plant on this traditional territory of the Gitwilgyoots Tribe of Lax Kw'alaams.

Lyle Donald Wesley Jr., son of the hereditary chief of Lax Kw'alaams, has made his position clear: no jobs are worth the destruction of this place.

"I am willing to die to protect it," he said

Danes, of Port Hardy, put it simply, "Our ancestors would have done the same thing."

Petronas, the Malaysian state-owned company behind the Pacific NorthWest LNG (PNW LNG) project, intends to build one of the world's largest LNG plants in an ecologically sensitive area encompassing Lelu Island, the edge of Flora Bank, and an estuary that lies at the mouth of the Skeena River. Members of Lax Kw'alaams and their supporters have been **occupying Lelu Island since August 25** in an effort to prevent research and construction of the plant with its proposed 0.99-mile bridge and 0.68-mile pier.

The Prince Rupert Port Authority believes the location is ideal for development, according to communications manager Michael J. Gurney. Close enough to be convenient yet out of sight from Prince Rupert, it has deep water access and is near a port.

The occupiers' concerns are rooted in the environmental sensitivity of the region, traditional land title, and protecting the economic viability of small-scale commercial fishers. The Skeena River is one of Canada's largest salmon producing rivers—second only to the Fraser—and averages about 10 million returning salmon each year. Residents that live in or use the area include thousands of eagles, porpoises, and orcas.

The project is still awaiting approval from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, which is expected to rule on the proposal in early 2016. According to a report commissioned by PNW LNG, "the project is not likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects on fish and fish habitat."

Despite structural changes PNW LNG made to the proposal to lessen the quantity of dredging required, the combination of construction and operation could still have a serious impact, said Greg Knox, executive director of the **SkeenaWild Conservation Trust**. Underwater blasting, dredging (more than 765,529 cubic yards) and trenching (2.8 miles) would be major components of construction; disturbing pre-existing contaminants from an old pulp mill and re-releasing them into the ecosystem.

Flora Bank is particularly vulnerable, with its shallow sandy bank rich in eelgrass that is vital to the health and protection of juvenile salmon. "This particular area is the most critical habitat that exists for Skeena salmon and it is probably the most critical and sensitive salmon habitat on the west coast of Canada," said Knox.

The degree of potential damage is uncertain. However, "When you put \$11 billion worth of infrastructure right over top of the most sensitive habitat there is on the West Coast, you are taking a rather big risk," he added.

It could collapse the commercial fishery and the \$100 million sport fishing industry and endanger the food-security of Indigenous folk all the way up the Skeena, Knox explained.

Drilling off the coast, into Agnew Bank, has been going on for weeks as PNW LNG tests soil samples and ascertains the depth of bedrock.

According to PNW LNG's Environmental Impact Statement, "Changes in sediment or water quality will be short-term and are not expected to affect fish health or marine resources as a whole."

That is small comfort, said Knox. "At low tide, right where they're doing all this drilling, that's where the fish are hanging out because there's no water on the [Flora] bank at low tide, so they're hanging beside the bank, over top of Agnew Bank... Petronas has been saying, basically, 'Hey, we're not going to touch Flora Bank, therefore everything's OK,' and it's an absurd argument because those fish are there twice a day, at low tide."

Flora Bank is highly unusual according to sedimentologist Patrick McLaren, of SedTrend Analysis. The bank has remained essentially unchanged since the ocean reached its current level some 8,000 years ago. That makes it a very vulnerable bit of sand, according to McLaren's report A Sediment Trend Analysis of Prince Rupert Harbour and Its Surrounding Waters.

Much of McLaren's work has been used in the most recent 3-D model by PNW LNG. McLaren however is flabbergasted at how they managed to take his research and come up with the conclusion that the plant would be harmless. "They've twisted it around to suggest that my work in fact supports their model, and that's absolutely incorrect, it doesn't support their model at all," McLaren said.

Spencer Sproule, PNW LNG's senior advisor was contacted, but was unavailable for on-the-record comment.

It has been nearly four months since the occupation began. In the beginning, interactions between occupiers and the PNW LNG-hired surveyors were relatively peaceful, consisting of escorting surveyors off Flora Bank and brief boat-to-boat interactions. However, tempers have flared over the last month. Occupiers yell across the water, demanding that workers get lost, while survey boats resort to constant video surveillance. One worker held up a grappling hook while the boats circled one another during a late-night confrontation. Boats have made physical contact. Boatloads of surveyors pass the island with their hands covering their faces while a designated videographer rolls to catch any angry words cast by the occupiers. The RCMP boat has been out patrolling the area regularly.

Lelu Island is under the traditional protection of hereditary chief Sm'oogyet Yahaan, or Donald Wesley Sr., of the Gitwilgyoots tribe of the Lax Kw'alaams, a Tsimshian Nation. Lax Kw'alaams is seeking legal title to the island.

**On November 9, Wesley penned a letter** to newly elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, asking him to halt the LNG project, warning that tensions were on the rise. The letter was endorsed by 70 signatories, including the Lax Kw'alaams Band Council, numerous other First Nation groups and several well-known environmentalists including David Suzuki and Alexandra Morton.

Four Tsimshian Nations **responded by declaring publicly** that they are not in accord with the letter and its demand that the project be scrapped.

Ken Lawson or Gwishawaal, a Gitwilgyoots house leader and current front man on the island, bluntly stated his opinion of their stance. This is not their land.

"This territory belongs to the Gitwilgyoots tribe. It does not belong to the other nations. They are Tsimshian. They have their own territories, they have their own houses. They have their own tribes. We are the Gitwilgyoots tribe. We are defending Gitwilgyoots territory... It's plain and simple, it's cut and dried. I'm not stepping on anyone's toes, I'm defending our territory... I'm defending this estuary, the land, the water, the way they should be. All of the nations should be defending this land, not just Gitwilgyoots tribe. This is for everybody."

Lawson acknowledges that the occupiers have come under scrutiny, even from his own community of Lax Kw'alaams, for the heckling and visible anger they have displayed to surveyors while on the water. "Let me put it this way, we're not going out there to blow kisses," Lawson said.

"I'll defend my guys by saying I think what they do, they are doing because they have to. We work with what we have and who we have, just like the surveyors are. The surveyors are trespassing. They are asked not to come onto Flora Bank. They are asked not to come onto Lelu Island. They came on anyway, so we're not just going to sit there and say 'have a nice day.' They're trespassing; so are we wrong or are they wrong? I say they're trespassing."

Occupation has not been easy. Occupiers spend their days building boardwalks, buildings, cooking, cutting firewood, patrolling the sea to disrupt the work of surveyors, removing flagging from trees marked by surveyors and putting up 'no trespassing' signs along the entire perimeter of the island; all the while trying to come together as a community.

One occupier, James Ryan, worked for 20 days nonstop, ten to 12 hours a day, building the first permanent structure on the island. He worked himself into a hospital bed where he remained for ten days. He returned to camp for another 12 days before taking a break.

Occupiers are a diverse and ever changing group; Lax Kw'alaams, Metlakatla, Haida Gwaii, Port Hardy, Unist'ot'en as well as non-indigenous supporters from Vancouver and beyond. The number of occupiers is constantly in flux due to the necessity of work, family and finances. For security reasons the exact number is kept private.

More than anything, camp life is hard, according to Leona Peterson, who is currently on the Island and has spent several days there, on multiple occasions. Peterson was one of the original handful—mostly women—who organized the occupation. Her first reaction when she learned about the project was tears, her second was action.

Peterson's governing council of Metlakatla signed an Impact Benefit Agreement with PNW LNG a year ago. They also rebutted the letter sent to PM Trudeau on Nov. 9, 2015. Peterson recalls the helplessness she felt when her leaders took that stand. "They're supposed to be the people that are looking out for us. And they've decided to align themselves with industrialization that will cripple us," she said.

Around the late night fire, discussions about the industrial complex and the meaning of development were central concerns. Talk turned to the 1763 Royal Proclamation, a piece of pre-Confederation legislation, which declares Indigenous land title has always and will continue to exist; that all land must be ceded by treaty or will continue to be considered indigenous. Most of British Columbia is unceded territory, including Lelu Island.

Voices got louder and the excitement was palpable when discussion turned to the Supreme Court decision of June 6, 2014, when the court made history by **awarding Aboriginal title to the Tsilhqot'in people in BC's interior**. "That case could really turn the tide for us," said Wesley Jr. Currently the case of Lelu Island is waiting to enter the courts.

The land claim is an important part of the battle over the island, but it is not a Native-only issue. "This is not a First Nation's issue, this is everybody," Lawson said.

The uncertain future weighs heavily on the pocketbooks of investors and workers with an eye on potential jobs: there's an estimated 8,000 person-years of work in BC and 650 full-time positions during the 30 years the plant would operate. But the weight sits all the more firmly on the hearts of the people who have grown up surrounded by this land and water, who make a playground of it in the summer months and who have sustained themselves and their families with the bounty of the sea.

"It's total devastation. Our whole ecosystem is being ripped out right in front of us," Wesley Jr. said. "It's like tearing out our heart. Everyone in my community depends on this."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.vice.com/read/meet-the-indigenous-occupiers-defending-british-columbias-lelu-island-against-lng-development>

# **Special Topic: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women**

## **Gathering set for families of missing and murdered aboriginal women**

CITIZEN STAFF / PRINCE GEORGE CITIZEN  
DECEMBER 18, 2015 02:11 PM



A three-day gathering in support of the families of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls will be held in Prince George in the new year.

Set for Jan. 31 to Feb. 2, it follows on a commitment aboriginal relations and reconciliation minister John Rustad made in June to hold the gathering.

It also follows on a June 2014 memorandum of understanding between the provincial government, the First Nations Leadership Council and Mtis Nation BC expressing their shared commitment to end violence against aboriginal women and girls.

Together they will partner with Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, the Minister's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women, Carrier Sekani Tribal Council and Carrier Sekani Family Services to co-host the gathering.

A private welcoming event will be held for family members on Jan. 31, with a variety of facilitated sessions and cultural activities taking place throughout Monday and Tuesday, Feb. 1 and 2.

"The family gathering's supportive environment will help foster further healing for families and communities who have experienced the pain caused from violence against

Aboriginal women and girls," the provincial government said in a press release issued Friday.

- See more at: <http://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/news/local-news/gathering-set-for-families-of-missing-and-murdered-aboriginal-women-1.2136480#sthash.wooDkRIT.dpuf>

## **Inquiry into violence against indigenous women needs teeth**

The inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women should go beyond apologies and shame about the past. It should see that justice is done.



Janet Pete, left, and her niece Genevieve Sullivan comfort each other during the 25th annual Women's Memorial March in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, B.C., on Saturday February 14, 2015. The march is held to honour missing and murdered women and girls from the community.

**By: Ronald Niezen** Published on Wed Dec 23 2015

The recent announcement of a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women provides an opportunity to do something that goes beyond apologies and shame about the past. It's an opportunity to restore dignity by seeing justice done.

We have seen public apologies, shame and sorrow in abundance. In the just-concluded Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on Indian residential schools we heard from survivors' often tearful testimony how they were physically and sexually abused, their languages and cultures targeted for elimination, their suffering and self-destruction transmitted to succeeding generations.

Official apologies are also often emotionally charged. Jane Stewart, the minister of Indian Affairs at the time that the Gathering Strength policy was unveiled in 1998, wept as she delivered the government's Statement of Reconciliation. Church officials, as accustomed as they are to self-examination and gestures of contrition, were sometimes unable to hold back tears as they delivered their official apologies to the TRC.

Clearly tears are not enough, but if we look at the mandate of the TRC, at the rules that set it in motion and that it was compelled to follow, we see one of the main reasons for this emphasis on emotional testimony: the commission was, quite simply, legally weak.

It was one of those “victim-centred” truth commissions that stress voluntary witness statements because they lack judicial authority. It was not given subpoena powers, not able to compel testimony from those individuals (especially in government) it most wanted to hear from. And those who did volunteer to give statements (they were not referred to as “witnesses” — another avoidance of judicial authority) were not permitted to “name names,” to reveal the identity of those they remembered as unpunished perpetrators of crime.

These are not inevitable features of truth commissions. Worldwide, other state-mandated inquiries have had more far-reaching powers.

South Africa dealt with the naming-names issue through a carefully crafted regime of conditional amnesty, encouraging perpetrators to give testimony about their involvement in political crimes, with amnesty conditional upon their truthfulness.

The commission in East Timor, with a mandate designed by the United Nations Transitional Administration, was assigned so-called Special Panels for Serious Crimes, authorized to investigate and prosecute serious offences — which they did, reaching up to the highest levels of government.

There have been many commissions with significant judicial powers, and, in fact, fewer, like Canada’s, with exclusively victim-oriented mandates.

This means there are gaps in the narratives we hear. There have been no “history wars,” no clash between competing interpretations of the past, in either the commission’s proceedings or the public reception of it. The priests, brothers, and nuns who ran the residential schools simmered in anger in their retirement residences, with diametrically opposed views of their experience with the schools from those presented in the commission’s “survivor statements.”

Through Canada’s various commissions of inquiry, there were no (or precious few) direct confrontations between those who hold contrary views, not to mention anything resembling an official reckoning for the crimes (and criminals) of the state.

There is an opportunity inherent in the recently announced inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women.

The ministers and their advisers who design the mandate can do something different, something that goes beyond tearful narrations and apologies, and the hoped-for catharsis of victim-confessions. Something that can instill pride in process, as much as shame about the past.

This time, let’s give it teeth.

**Ronald Niezen**, a Professor of Law and Anthropology at McGill University, holds the Katharine A. Pearson Chair in Civil Society and Public Policy.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2015/12/23/inquiry-into-violence-against-indigenous-women-needs-teeth.html>

# Special Topic: Residential Schools, TRC, & '60s Scoop

## Canada Promises 'True Reconciliation' For Carrying Out 'Cultural Genocide' Against Indigenous People

BY BEENISH AHMED DEC 19, 2015 1:50 PM



*Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau addresses world leaders at the COP21, United Nations Climate Change Conference, in Le Bourget, outside Paris, Monday, Nov. 30, 2015.*

Seven years after the Canadian government formally apologized for its role in running residential schools used to strip indigenous Canadians of their ethnic identities, the Prime Minister has promised “true reconciliation.”

“Our goal, as we move forward together, is clear: it is to lift this burden from your shoulders, from those of your families and communities. It is to accept fully our responsibilities and our failings, as a government and as a country,” Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told hundreds of residential school survivors this week. Trudeau’s announcement came after the sixth and final report on the residential school system was issued by the country’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The newly-elected prime minister vowed to develop a framework to respond to what the Commission called “cultural genocide” against the country’s indigenous population. “We recognize that true reconciliation goes beyond the scope of the commission’s calls to action,” Trudeau said. “I am therefore announcing that we will work with leaders of First Nations, the Métis nation, Inuit, provinces and territories, parties to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and other key partners to design a national engagement strategy for developing and implementing a national reconciliation

framework, including a formal response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action."

ThinkProgress reported on the program in June:

Families were often coerced by police into sending their children to these schools as part of a policy, intended, "not to educate them, but primarily to break their link to their culture and identity," according to the commission's findings. The schools functioned first under the purview of various churches, and then with the support of the government from 1883 until 1998.

The children's cultural identity was not the only thing that suffered at the schools — First Nation, Métis, and Inuit children were brutalized through physical abuse, sexual violence, derogatory language, meager food, and a deliberate attempt to rid them of their cultural identities. The commission found that at least 3,201 students died while at the schools, often because of abuse and neglect.

**Direct Link:** <http://thinkprogress.org/world/2015/12/19/3734080/canada-indigenous-people/>

## 'I still remember the hurt I was in'

Mel Buffalo recalls horrors of Edmonton residential school

Wednesday, Dec 23, 2015 06:00 am **By: Kevin Ma**



**SURVIVOR** – Mel Buffalo looks on at the Wetaskiwin courthouse where he works as a court advocate. Buffalo, who now practises law, was once a student of the Edmonton residential school just outside St. Albert.

Some 52 years ago, Mel Buffalo helped stage a rebellion just outside of St. Albert.

He was a student at the Edmonton Indian Residential School – a place of brutal discipline and cultural extermination located where Poundmaker's Lodge stands today. He and others

were beaten with leather straps whenever they tried to speak Cree, and forced to clean urinals using toothbrushes – all with the full support of the federal government.

Buffalo, now a court advocate with the Sampson Cree First Nation in Maskwacis, recalls how a few supervisors started to abuse students in the middle of the night around 1963.

“We decided to barricade the doors to the dorms and not let anyone in,” he says.

As he told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, this led to a dramatic face-off with supervisors trying to ram the door down, which they had blocked with heavy dressers. The RCMP were called in, and he and his friends tossed out a list demanding better food and that the offending supervisors be fired.

The supervisors were sacked. The school principal soon after called Buffalo and his grandfather, the chief of the Sampson Cree First Nation, down to the office.

“Mr. Buffalo,” the principal said, “your son is here ... we can’t handle him, we’d appreciate it if you could take him back, and good luck in raising him.”

Buffalo was expelled, but his grandfather wouldn’t have it.

“A week later I was back in the school!” he says, laughing.

Buffalo, 65, is one of the roughly 6,750 contributors to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s final report on the residential school system, which was released last week.

The roughly 4,700-page report is meant to be the definitive history of the residential school program, which saw thousands of aboriginal children taken from their homes, often by force, and put through an education system explicitly designed to annihilate their culture.

Buffalo is one of the many survivors featured in the report’s “The Survivors Speak” section, which relates the residential school experience in the words of those who lived it.

You hear a lot of stories in the media about the bedlam and grief in the schools, and not enough about how some stood up to oppression, Buffalo says.

“We just didn’t stand around and get run over by the system. We fought back.”

## **The prison school**

The Edmonton residential school ran from 1924 to 1968, the commission reports. The United Church of Canada Archives notes that the school was effectively a dormitory after June 1960, as its students were bused to Jasper Place for lessons.

Knowing what we know now about the schools, it seems unthinkable that Buffalo’s mother and grandfather would voluntarily send him to a residential school. The commission reports that attendance was never mandatory for all First Nation students, although the government could, and often did, force students to attend.

“I got into trouble in junior high,” Buffalo says, and his family thought residential school would set him straight.

“We looked at it like a reform school.”

Buffalo did two stints in the Edmonton school, once from 1958 to 1959 and again from 1963 to 1968.

Survivors of the Edmonton school have described it to the Gazette as prison-like, with barbed-wire fences, strict regulation, and harsh punishments.

Buffalo says school officials forbade him from speaking Cree almost as soon as he arrived in 1958. When he was caught, supervisors struck him five times on each hand with a leather strap. In later years, offenders would be sentenced to 24 or 48 hours of ostracism, where no one was allowed to speak to them – they called it the “ice treatment.”

The school was divided by gender, with boys and girls forbidden from interacting with each other.

“My sister was on the other side. I couldn’t even say hi to her.”

Buffalo says students would have to do many chores around the school such as polishing floors or cleaning urinals.

He even had to bury bodies in the school’s graveyard in the middle of the night. He’s not sure where the bodies came from, but suspects they may have been from the Charles Camsell Hospital, which housed many aboriginals with tuberculosis.

He was 13 at the time.

“It was pretty scary.”

The commission found that many survivors recalled rigid, military discipline at the schools, with lives regulated by bells and students referred to by numbers instead of names.

Buffalo says he had to make his bed in a precise military style or else the supervisor would rip off the sheets and make him do it again. Sometimes this happened three times in a row.

Bedding and underwear was changed exactly once a week. If you wet the bed, you were forced to sleep in it until laundry day as punishment.

“I really didn’t like the underwear change (policy),” Buffalo says, so he and a few other students started washing their shorts every night. The staffers were furious, but they couldn’t stop them.

The commission found that many students were frequently underfed or fed terrible food, with some forced to eat food they vomited up. Many, like Buffalo, turned to theft just to survive.

“You could skate across the porridge,” Buffalo says, and the biscuits were so hard they used them as hockey pucks.

During his first stint at the school, he refused to eat porridge for three days, despite staff forcing it on him at every meal. His parents later pulled him from the school because he wasn't eating, he explains.

Finally, he says he was fed up enough to hurl the mess against the wall and say, "There, it's finished, you happy?"

"The next morning, we got puffed wheat and cornflakes."

### **Learn from the past**

While the Edmonton school closed in 1968, residential schools continued to operate in Canada until 1998.

There were a lot of mixed feelings amongst the students when the school closed, Buffalo says – some had spent their whole lives there, and wouldn't even remember their families if they did go home.

Buffalo later got his degree in Native Law from the University of Saskatchewan and played prominent roles in groups such as the National Aboriginal Housing Association.

Although he says his time at the Edmonton school instilled in him a strong work ethic and made him a better, stronger person, he still had tears in his eyes last week while watching coverage of the release of the commission's final report.

"I always will remember what happened," he says.

"It was a bad time in my life ... I still remember the hurt I was in."

The report includes 94 steps for Canadians to undertake to redress the legacy of residential schools, such as the creation of a federal Aboriginal Languages Act, a national council for reconciliation, and age-appropriate, mandatory course material on residential schools for students in kindergarten up to Grade 12.

Buffalo hopes non-aboriginals will seek to learn about the residential schools and work to improve the relationship between our two peoples.

"This chapter that happened, we can never erase it, we can never forget it, but what we should do is learn from it."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.stalbertgazette.com/article/I-still-remember-the-hurt-I-was-in-20151223>

## **Special Topic: International Indigenous Populations**

## Controversy brews around Native American imagery in Northmen logo



Fred Harrington, a member of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, has posted a sign reading "I am not a mascot" outside his home to protest the use of the Northmen logo and has targeted picketing at school board member Mark Ashley with a sign reading, "I am Mark Ashley's Indian mascot."

Posted: Friday, December 18, 2015 8:20 am

Jillian Fellows (231) 881-1950 -[jfellows@petoskeynews.com](mailto:jfellows@petoskeynews.com)

**PETOSKEY** — When the Petoskey High School football team takes the field, their helmets are emblazoned with a feathered spear.

Students walking the halls wear T-shirts and sweatshirts featuring the school's logo, the side profile of a Native American man, with two feathers in his hair.

The image has been used to represent the school since it was first designed more than 20 years ago, but recently local members of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians have called for the Petoskey Board of Education to review and change the logo.

"We have students in the school system who have spoken out against it," said Fred Harrington, a member of the tribe and a Petoskey resident. "Basically, they don't want to be targeted or bullied and I told them that I would work on this for them."

Petoskey superintendent John Scholten said this year is the first time in his 11 years with the district that he has heard complaints about the logo.

"I really have not had, other than this year, anyone come forward to say they have a problem with this," he said.

Scholten said the current logo was designed in 1993 to replace an older version.

"The artwork was done by a local Native American," Scholten said. "They felt the depiction wasn't accurate. It didn't look or fit what was representative of the region."

Over time, however, Harrington said the logo has devolved into a stereotype.

"The continued use of logos and mascots is just bad for our people. It generates stereotypes and it continues the use of stereotypes that are derogatory," he said. "It

degrades and it just moves from what was a well-intentioned respectful item that was going to be just a logo to a mascot.”

Scholten says he uses the term “logo” in regards to the imagery because in his view, a mascot is something that someone dresses up as.

Harrington said that he doesn't see the difference between the two terms.

“I don't see the difference myself,” he said. “The mascot is the Indian head. He came to life. When he started wearing other helmets and when they brought the spear in, they're using him as a mascot. I'm against logos anyway but it basically changed from a logo to a mascot.”

Harrington's campaign recently caught the attention of John Austin, president of the Michigan State Board of Education. Austin sent a letter and a 2003 resolution from the State Board of Education concerning the use of Native American mascots, nicknames and logos to Scholten earlier this week.

“We, as a board, have been strongly encouraging that our schools move away from using Indian symbols and mascots,” Austin said. “There are many school communities that have an Indian motif of some sort ... most have moved away from or tried to end that practice.”

Austin added that it is important “to respect the rights and views of all cultures in the community.”

The resolution, from June 2003, states that “the Michigan State Board of Education supports and strongly recommends the elimination of American Indian mascots, nicknames, logos, fight songs, insignias, antics and team descriptors by all Michigan schools.”

A similar 2005 resolution from the local tribe states that “the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians Tribal Council condemns the use of Indian likenesses or cultural items as mascots, logos and nicknames by professional sports teams, universities, colleges and other schools.”

Scholten said the district was unaware of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians resolution until recently and had heard from only one or two community members about the use of the logo. During the Petoskey Board of Education's Thursday night meeting, however, Scholten and the board were able to hear from several members of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians and other community members on the issue.

David Dominic, a member of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, addressed high school students in the room who were there for a class assignment when he said, “Here in this area, we have a Native American culture that is very dear to us. It's very important to us. Our students, our children that are now going to school here, it's important to them. It's important for you students to recognize them and to recognize their needs and their wants just like you will as you grow older and you go on to college. It's very important.”

Warren Petoskey, great-great-grandson of Chief Ignatius Petoskey, said he attended a high school in Lansing that had a Native American mascot and that it “was embarrassing because that was not me.”

“This is a line of delineation and it creates a barrier,” he said. “People are offended by it.”

Anthony Davis, a member of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, was emotional as he addressed the board, saying that his “heart was pounding while I heard these elders speak.”

"I'm not here for me. I'm here for our future," he said. "Our youth, the Native youth, the Anishinaabe youth, they don't deserve this. This is 2015. It's gone on long enough."

Other community members were also inspired to speak at the meeting. Petoskey resident Brian Kay said he was moved to stand up and speak after hearing members of the tribe.

"I view these symbols as a part of our history," he said. "Maybe it shouldn't go any further ... maybe it should back down a little bit."

Board members said they were grateful to hear comments from the public. Board president Kathy Reed said that it "would be appropriate to take the next step to think about how we can work as a team on this issue."

After the meeting, Scholten added that he was glad people came forward to speak.

"I think it took a lot of courage and I was real proud of what they did tonight," he said. "It gives us a different perspective to look at. We've got to put some time to this and discuss this and think about this."

**Direct Link:** [http://www.petoskeynews.com/featured-pnr/controversy-brews-around-native-american-imagery-in-northmen-logo/article\\_ee296768-f5f5-51c8-b534-c8862ace2450.html](http://www.petoskeynews.com/featured-pnr/controversy-brews-around-native-american-imagery-in-northmen-logo/article_ee296768-f5f5-51c8-b534-c8862ace2450.html)

## **WATCH: Standing Rock Sioux Brothers Film Documentary on Native American Mascots**

Tara Houska

12/17/15

"So, what's next in the mascot movement?"

It's a question I'm frequently asked, met with a long-ish response. The efforts towards change are multi-faceted, with different strategies being employed throughout the country. One such initiative is that of John and Ken Little, two brothers enrolled in the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.

They have been working on a film called "More Than a Name," that will cover the issue of race-based mascots from a multitude of perspectives. The documentary was conceived in 2013, and filming began in 2014.

Like much of the movement against Native American mascots, their effort has been entirely grassroots in nature. The Little brothers established Black Tongue Dakota Films for production of their film; the name is derived from the name of their father's intertribal drum group.

Ranging from the halls of Congress to demonstrations in the streets, the documentary aims to address the many angles of the fight against Native American mascots. Fan interviews are interspersed throughout clips of Native American advocates for change,

including Amanda Blackhorse, Clyde Bellecourt, Henry Boucha, Gregg Deal, and Simon Moya-Smith.



John Little, left, and Ken Little. Photo courtesy [gofundme.com](http://gofundme.com)

By including as many viewpoints as possible, the film makers hope to more fully explore the supporters of Native mascots alongside those who believe caricaturing is destructive.

“Our main goal is to educate those unfamiliar with Native American culture as well as provide inspiration for those involved in the battle of fighting cultural appropriation,” John Little, a PhD student at the University of Minnesota, told ICTMN. “We hope that this documentary demonstrates Natives as people and not mascots. We are part of a vibrant and growing community that has survived into the 21st century.”

So far, “More Than a Name” has been self-funded. John has become a familiar face at rallies organized outside of football stadiums.

To support the next phase of filming the documentary, Black Tongue Dakota Films is seeking [public donations](#).

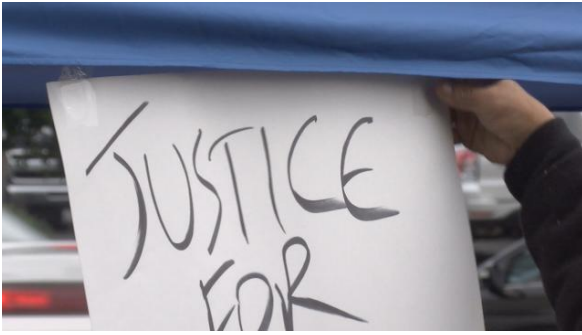
*Tara Houska (Couchiching First Nation) is a tribal rights attorney in Washington, D.C., a founding member of [NotYourMascots.org](http://NotYourMascots.org), and an all-around rabble rouser. Follow her: [@zhaabowekwe](https://twitter.com/zhaabowekwe).*

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/12/17/watch-standing-rock-sioux-brothers-film-documentary-native-american-mascots-162812>

## Rally held for Native American victims of police shootings

By *Herman Meier*, Photojournalist, [hmeier@bontencalifornia.com](mailto:hmeier@bontencalifornia.com)

POSTED: 9:34 PM Dec 18 2015



**EUREKA, Calif. -**

Dozens of people gathered at the Humboldt County Courthouse Friday afternoon for the rally for remembrance - justice for native lives rally.

Many of those that attended were friends and family of 17-year old Richie Estrada.

Estrada was the Hoopa Valley teen that was shot and killed a year ago Friday in Willow Creek during an officer involved shooting.

The family invited community members to join them as well.

Many feel that they have been victims of an overwhelming amount of police violence against Native Americans.

Richie's mother, Leanne Estrada, wants the community to know that there needs to be more conflict resolution training not only within the police departments but the community as well.

"Due to the higher rates of Native Americans losing their lives to law-enforcement across the country over the last 10 years...we best decided that it would be to honor not only my son but for all of our people," Estrada said.

She hopes to join other state and national rallies to share her message and story.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.krcrtv.com/north-coast-news/news/rally-held-for-native-american-victims-of-police-shootings/37043272>

## **Conversation group to discuss Native and non-Native American relations**

December 18, 2015 7:00 pm • Journal staff

The Rapid City Community Conversations group is holding its ninth meeting Saturday at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center in Rushmore Room G.

The conversation, from 7:30 a.m. to noon, will focus on Native American issues in the community.

"We have created a safe place, nonjudgmental place for Indians and non-Indians to come together, get to know each other, to share a meal, to develop trust, and to create sustainable solutions," organizer Cante Heart wrote in a press-release.

The conversation will include members of the Mniluzahan Okolakiciyapi Ambassadors and Lakota Nation Invitational participants. The public is invited.

In the press release, organizer Chas Jewett said it was important to hold the meeting during the Lakota Nation Invitational "to make sure the students and tournament participants feel welcome when they come to Rapid City."

**Direct Link:** [http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/conversation-group-to-discuss-native-and-non-native-american-relations/article\\_db4df695-4d9b-5ef9-bbf8-23155c84a096.html](http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/conversation-group-to-discuss-native-and-non-native-american-relations/article_db4df695-4d9b-5ef9-bbf8-23155c84a096.html)

## Can Industry and Indigenous Interests Avoid a Collision in the Amazon?

Posted: 12/18/2015 5:30 pm EST Updated: 12/18/2015 5:59 pm EST

**Mark Tercek**, President & CEO, The Nature Conservancy; Author, 'Nature's Fortune: How Business and Society Thrive by Investing in Nature'



**By Mark R. Tercek and Erin Myers Madeira**

When it comes to development and indigenous peoples, the story we so often hear is one of exploitation and conflict. At the Global Landscapes Forum - which ran in parallel with the climate summit in Paris in December - there were glimmers of a very different story emerging.

At a discussion forum on Indigenous Peoples' rights and land tenure, a united refrain could be heard coming from opposite ends of the spectrum. There were indigenous and corporate voices calling for greater engagement of indigenous peoples in moving towards a more sustainable development future in the Amazon.

"We want to take part concretely in the development of our lands," said Maximiliano Correa Menezes, General Coordinator for COIAB, the Amazon's principle indigenous association. From the private sector, there was Antonio Fonescal dos Santos, Director of Environment and Sustainability of Brookfield Renewable Energy Group. He explained why his company has been working with COIAB on Brazil's Business and Indigenous People's Dialogue Initiative, which focuses on improving the relationship between companies and indigenous peoples in the Amazon, building more inclusive models of engagement and planning.

### **Extreme development pressures**

More than 20% of global forest carbon and much of the world's biodiversity is found in indigenous territories. We are not going to achieve the climate goals made in Paris unless indigenous and local communities are meaningful partners in creating the solution. Flying into São Félix do Xingu in Brazil's Pará State makes this very clear. The expansive green canopy of forest ends abruptly in a landscape of flat pasture. Underneath the canopied area was one of Brazil's Indigenous Lands- of which there are almost 700.

Brazil's indigenous peoples have been successfully stewarding the Amazonian forests for thousands of years, but seeing ranches and mining operations butting up against indigenous land, it's clear that this system faces yet more challenges. At least \$40 billion is slated for 40 major infrastructure projects in the Amazon, much of which will affect indigenous lands.

Given the extreme development pressures and the imbalance between industry and indigenous access to resources; and given the deeply vested interests on both sides, were indigenous and business leaders really going to find common ground on how to develop the Amazon?

Helcio Souza, the Coordinator of The Nature Conservancy's Conservation in Indigenous Lands Strategy in Brazil, was well attuned to this impending collision of interests when he began the Dialogue Initiative in 2012. The conflicts were well-known and worsening. "You only heard about all the threats to indigenous lands; no one was trying to do something to improve the situation," Helcio explains.

In November, the public draft of Brazilian Guidelines for Good Corporate Practice with Indigenous Peoples was launched. This voluntary standard defines the 'rules of the road,' offering guidelines to companies for conducting business in a way that respects and engages appropriately with indigenous lands and peoples. "The discussion has led to an important shift in the mindset of all participating sectors. The relationship between companies and indigenous peoples came to be seen as an opportunity for both groups as opposed to one of permanent risk," says Helcio.

The three-plus year process to develop the guidelines has engaged thousands of people and has found common ground. It has injected a sliver of optimism into what formerly seemed to be a doomed adversarial relationship, but there are many challenges ahead.

However, three years ago, it would have been difficult to envisage these two very different men on stage with a shared vision and resolve - laying out a pathway for the greater inclusion of indigenous peoples in infrastructure development in the Amazon. Achieving sustainable development will hinge on addressing indigenous people's rights and bringing their voices more strongly into the process. And Maximiliano's and Antonio's comments suggest that this is at least possible. "You must have a dialogue with us," explained Maximiliano, "You must take into account our rights."

Ambitious commitments were made in Paris. It's now time to roll up our sleeves and start implementing solutions. There is no way we will be able to achieve the climate stabilization goals that were made in Paris without meaningfully engaging indigenous peoples and local communities in developing the solution.

*End note: The core leadership group of the Business and Indigenous People's Dialogue Initiative is comprised of COIAB (the Amazon's principal Indigenous association), FUNAI (the Brazilian federal agency of Indigenous affairs, Instituto Socioambiental (ISA), the Brazilian Beef Exporters Association (ABIEC), the Brazilian Association of Pulp and Paper (BRACELPA), the Power Industry Environmental Forum (FMASE), the Working Group of the Brazilian Roundtable on Sustainable Livestock (GTPS), and the Brazilian Mining Institute (IBRAM). Other participating companies included Anglo American, Brookfield Power, Itaipu, Suzano, Vale and Veracel. It includes representation from the major sectors impacting the Amazon - the electric, mining, agribusiness and pulp and paper sectors. The Dialogue is facilitated by The Nature Conservancy.*

*Photo: Discussion on Indigenous Peoples' rights and land tenure at the Global Landscapes Forum.*

*Mark R. Tercek is the president and CEO of the Nature Conservancy and author of Nature's Fortune. Follow Mark on Twitter @MarkTercek.*

*Erin Myers Madeira is the Global Lands' Indigenous and Communities Program Lead for the Nature Conservancy.*

**Direct Link:** [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-tercek/can-industry-and-indigeno\\_b\\_8842100.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-tercek/can-industry-and-indigeno_b_8842100.html)

## **Native American Tribes Approve Plan to Grow and Sell Marijuana in Oregon**

**By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS** DEC. 19, 2015

PORTLAND, Ore. — Members of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs have approved a plan to build a facility to grow marijuana on their reservation in central Oregon and to sell it at tribe-owned stores outside the reservation.

The tribes are among the first in the country to enter the marijuana-growing business, a year after a Department of Justice policy indicated tribes could grow and sell marijuana under the same guidelines as states that opt to legalize.

Tribal officials said more than 80 percent of tribal voters favored the proposal in the referendum, which was held Thursday.

Warm Springs's plan is to build a 36,000-square-foot greenhouse to grow and process the cannabis. Officials expect the project will create more than 80 jobs. Annual net revenue from the three proposed tribe-owned retail shops would top \$26 million, the officials estimated.

The tribes say they will enter into an agreement with state agencies to ensure that testing and other regulations are consistent with state law. Sales are set to start in winter 2016.

“Our main purpose is to create jobs on the reservation and produce revenue for the tribes,” said Don Sampson of the tribes’ economic development corporation. “We think we will have a model other tribes will look to as they investigate this business and industry.”

The proposal does not change the tribal law that bans marijuana possession on the reservation, which is about 90 miles southeast of Portland.

In November 2014, Oregon voters approved Measure 91, which legalized recreational marijuana. But legal sales are not expected to begin until 2016.

Many tribes have opposed legalization and marijuana sales because of the potential to compound alcohol and drug problems on reservations. Some tribes banned marijuana outright.

But at least a half-dozen tribes this year have legalized marijuana on their reservations or have pursued marijuana projects.

**Direct Link:** [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/20/us/native-american-tribes-approve-plan-to-grow-and-sell-marijuana-in-oregon.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/20/us/native-american-tribes-approve-plan-to-grow-and-sell-marijuana-in-oregon.html?_r=0)

**Native American land buy-back program extends to Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation in ND**

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

December 20, 2015 - 11:55 am EST

BELCOURT, North Dakota — The federal government says it has signed an agreement with the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians to extend a land buy-back program to their reservation in northern North Dakota.

The agreement between the tribe and the Interior Department paves the way for the government to buy fractionated land parcels from their multiple owners and give them to the tribe.

Allotting reservation land to individual tribal members, who passed it to heirs, was once a government method for assimilating American Indians. Some parcels have several owners.

Tribal Chairman Richard McCloud says the program will bring economic development opportunities to the reservation.

The program has paid over \$729 million to individual landowners and restored the equivalent of about 1.5 million acres of land to tribal governments since it began in 2013.

**Direct Link:**

<http://www.dailyjournal.net/view/story/d721b2de04974b6e98ba1154c68f2c2f/ND--Land-Buy-Back-Reservation>

## **Tina Fey Dodges 'Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt' Racism Controversy: 'I'm Opting Out'**

**Linda Ge**

**The Wrap**

December 19, 2015



Tina Fey Dodges 'Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt' Racism Controversy: 'I'm Opting Out'

Tina Fey is well aware of the charges of racism lobbed against her Netflix series “Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt,” but she won’t be engaging in or commenting on it.

In fact, she’s steering clear of what she calls the “culture of demanding apologies” on the internet altogether in a new interview with Net-a-Porter.

“We did an ‘Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt’ episode and the internet was in a whirlwind, calling it racist, but my new goal is not to explain jokes,” she said.

The joke within the show had to do with Jane Krakowski’s character Jacqueline Voorhees. In one episode, it’s revealed that Jacqueline is Native American, but had rejected her heritage.

“I feel like we put so much effort into writing and crafting everything, they need to speak for themselves,” Fey continued. “There’s a real culture of demanding apologies, and I’m opting out of that.”

Fey currently stars in “Sisters” opposite Amy Poehler. “Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt,” on which Fey is an EP, has been renewed for Season 2.

**Direct Link:** <https://www.yahoo.com/tv/tina-fey-dodges-unbreakable-kimmy-schmidt-racism-controversy-003653272.html>

## **Niagara Wheatfield’s Tuscarora School helps kids navigate two cultures**

Lessons in native culture and language are at the heart of the program at the Tuscarora Indian School

An education in integration



Joanne Weinholtz works with 5th graders in the culture room at the Tuscarora Indian School on the Tuscarora Reservation Monday, December 7, 2015. (Mark Mulville/Buffalo News)

***By Teresa Sharp****Niagara correspondent* on December 19, 2015 - 12:01 AM,  
updated December 19, 2015 at 3:42 PM

– Colorful projects line the school hallways, carefully written in the children’s native Tuscarora language and in English. They are a reminder that the Tuscarora Indian School offers a collaboration between two cultures and that these young children live in both worlds.

The prekindergarten through sixth-grade students learn the rich history of the Tuscarora culture. And, the staff, under the direction of Principal Elizabeth Corieri, also strives to prepare them for the future.

The Tuscarora Indian School is one of the few in the New York State educational system serving entirely native student populations and situated on Native American territory, in this case, the Tuscarora Nation in Lewiston.

Teacher Joanne Weinholtz calls the native language and culture taught at Tuscarora “the heart of our children’s education.”

“We’re helping to plant our students’ roots,” said Weinholtz, who has taught at the school for 30 years. “Their families are the first to do this but we also contribute, so that no matter where they are, they know who they are.”

One of four elementary schools in the Niagara Wheatfield Central School District, the school at 2015 Mount Hope Road has 104 students, 22 teachers and additional support staff.

A dozen other districts throughout New York contract with the state to provide an education to native students, with a commitment to preserve their respective traditions, languages and cultures. But these schools are not located on native lands and may not have all native students.

Corieri came to the Tuscarora School as a teacher in 1992 and became principal 17 years ago.

“We want to create a caring atmosphere at all times – for our students to be kind and compassionate,” she said.

“We strive each day to keep our academic standards high and promote deep thinking in each classroom,” she added. “We take pride in our weekly paper, the Tuscarora Times, to keep our connections between home and school. And we strive to create a positive mindset for our students to take through middle school and high school with confidence.”

Promoting the integration of native language and culture into a day already jammed with the state’s Common Core requirements calls for “a lot of collaboration,” Corieri admitted.

Weinholtz has taught native culture classes as part of the students’ daily curriculum for the past 25 years.

“I also collaborate with teachers who are teaching social studies and English Language Arts, for example, but from a cultural perspective,” she said.

“At Thanksgiving time, I teach the history of 1620 and 1621 and we use maps of the areas where the indigenous people were, prior to their first contact with Europeans,” Weinholtz said. “We look at what was going on in Europe at that time and where we, the Tuscaroras, were at that time in history.

“It was a new world to the Europeans but an ancient world to us,” she said. “We already had a very knowledgeable and sophisticated culture here at that time. So, the history of Thanksgiving is actually very complex.”

Weinholtz has a unique perspective, as she attended Tuscarora as a student. She’s been able to use new technology, like her classroom’s Smartboard, to take students on virtual tours of places like Plymouth, Mass.

Her bright corner classroom is filled with native artifacts, like rugs, pelts, pottery and beads – and dozens of books. She also teaches a Native American culture class for middle school students who choose to return to the Tuscarora school after their own school day has ended.

Fellow teacher Patricia Pineda offers lessons in beadwork and social dance after school as well.

Ten-year-old Landen Johnson, a fifth-grader, said of Weinholtz’s culture classes, “It’s very educational. We just learned about the first Thanksgiving and the archaeology. We learned about the Pilgrims and other white people that came over and about the Tuscarora and where they were then.”

Landen also said he “knew some simple words” in his native Tuscarora tongue when he started school, but Corieri said she’s heard him converse in Tuscarora and she’s impressed.

The students start taking classes in the Tuscarora language as early as Pre-K, according to Vince Schiffert, who teaches the language to grades three through six, and also teaches Native American studies at the high school. Tina Pineda is the other Tuscarora language teacher at the elementary school.

They both attended Tuscarora as children and recalled that the language was not offered until the early 1970s. While the Tuscarora language is integrated into the lessons throughout the students’ career at Tuscarora Indian School, it is an elective in middle and high school.

Corieri said she would like to see an indigenous languages certificate program offered for instructors in New York State to ensure the preservation of the language.

Charles Rinaldi, retired superintendent in the Gowanda Central School District, which serves a large Seneca population, said an effort is underway to explore this.

He said there are currently five certifications listed by the state Education Department in Seneca language instruction, but no clear path to attain them.

He said the Seneca Nation and SUNY Fredonia have initiated a project, partnering with school districts that serve Seneca populations; Gowanda, Silver Creek, Lake Shore, Salamanca and Akron; along with Niagara-Wheatfield, the state Education Department and Erie 2 Chautauqua-Cattaraugus BOCES. Together, they are seeking a defined program acceptable to all parties.

The results would be a new “indigenous languages certification model in Seneca, which could be expanded to include other Six Nation speakers,” Rinaldi said. He was referring to the Tuscarora, Mohawk, Onondaga, Cayuga and Oneida.

He said the concept is relatively new and that, “We are trying, together, to explore this path.”

In the meantime, the staff at Tuscarora Indian School continues to explore the old ways with new generations, yet prepare its young pupils to become global citizens in the 21st century.

“Our students discuss contemporary, global issues and need awareness of the world and compassion for fellow humans,” Weinholtz said.

Summarizing the school’s mission, she added, “This is a passion and way of life. My Dad always says, ‘We can create what we want.’ So much of what happens here in school spills over to the community at large. So many of our young people graduate from these programs and go out and do even more.

“And, the spill-over effect can even be felt throughout our Tuscarora building,” Weinholtz said. “Principal Corieri encourages the Tuscarora/Haudenosaunee culture’s belief of the ‘power of the good mind.’ ”

**Direct Link:** <http://www.buffalonews.com/city-region/schools/niagara-wheatfields-tuscarora-school-helps-kids-navigate-two-cultures-20151219>

## **Proposed policy requiring major Calgary roads to have aboriginal names an 'empty gesture'**

**BY MICHAEL PLATT, CALGARY SUN**

FIRST POSTED: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2015 04:13 PM MST |

UPDATED: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2015 10:27 AM MST

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Traffic whizzes by on Deerfoot Trail, named after the Blackfoot runner who developed a reputation for being one of the fastest in southern Alberta in the 1880s. STUART DRYDEN/CALGARY SUN

It’s just a single word, but for Calgary’s busiest roads, the omission means historic change.

No more Macleod, Barlow, Laurie or McKnight in Calgary’s freeway future, and no Glenmore, Memorial or Bow.

From now on, any freeway or expressway built in Calgary must have a First Nations name, like those already used for arteries like Crowchild, Deerfoot and Sarcee trails, as well as Peigan, Shaganappi, Stoney and Metis.

That's the rigid rule under the city's revamped Municipal Naming Policy, which sets guidelines for all names in Calgary's public realm, whether it's a park, street, community or public building.

The policy, last overhauled in 2005, includes freeways and expressways, which are defined by the city as "a road that carries more than 30,000 vehicles per day."

The old policy reads that freeways and expressways are "generally given aboriginal names." Note that's "generally."

The new law, expected to be passed by council in the early New Year, now reads "Freeways are given aboriginal names. Expressways are given aboriginal names." It's a massive policy shift, effectively ruling out any non-Native person, place or significant event for respect via one of Calgary's best-known roadways, reserving that preeminent municipal honour for a single ethnic group in a city that at last count was home to 240 different cultures.

Politically, the new policy is correct as can be, and those on city council seem to accept the change.

"In any case, there are no roads of that size planned, and there won't be for a long time," said Coun. Ward Sutherland.

Of course that begs the question, why change the rule at all?

Whether in principle or reality, there are countless reasons not to slam the door on the rest of Calgary's history, for the sake of an empty gesture to the First Nations of Southern Alberta.

And no, it's not just so more white guys can have their names on things, though there are good arguments for naming something more than a far-flung park after the likes of Ralph Klein, or something truly vital for an overlooked figure like political satirist Bob Edwards.

It's because Calgary is a city that's about more than one group or history, and a restrictive, pandering rule like this means the best possible name won't necessarily be chosen, such as when Sunnyside Blvd. was renamed Memorial Dr. in honour of Calgary's Great War dead.

That couldn't happen under this new First Nations first rule, nor could a historical designation like Glenmore, or an honour like that afforded to war heroes like Willie McKnight and Noel Barlow.

And with a long list of potential honourees from Calgary's multi-cultured history — John Ware, Virnetta Anderson, Harnam Singh Hari and George Ho Lem instantly come to mind — it seems narrow minded to restrict major roads to the First Nations.

If city council wants to honour the aboriginal culture there are much better ways, starting with the current names on Calgary streets.

Sarcee, Peigan and Blackfoot?

In case the city didn't notice, those names aren't exactly in vogue anymore — and it would show far more respect to alter the current roads to Tsuut'ina, Piikani and Siksika, to reflect the names chosen by the nations those roads allegedly respect.

And then there was the lazy, generalized naming of Metis Trail in 2006, when honouring a specific Metis person, like former Calgary Senator Thelma J. Chalifoux, would have shown far more respect to the culture, while offering some educational value as well.

But this isn't about preventing city council from honouring our First Nations via future freeways, and this columnist for one thinks it's a travesty no road in Calgary honours Bull Head, the warrior chief who established the modern Tsuut'ina Nation.

But to limit naming honours to one specific group in Calgary, whether it's for parks, streets or buildings, is a disservice to the many people, cultures and events that it took to make this city what it is today.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.calgarysun.com/2015/12/19/proposed-policy-requiring-major-calgary-roads-to-have-aboriginal-names-an-empty-gesture>

## **Indigenous Hell-Raiser as National Hero: Billy Frank, Jr. Wins Presidential Medal Of Freedom**

Gyasi Ross

12/19/15

*"I wasn't a policy guy. I was a getting-arrested guy."* - Billy Frank, Jr.

A couple of weeks ago, on November 24, the United States of America awarded a bushy haired Native man, Billy Frank, Jr., the Presidential Medal of Freedom. That's a big deal—that's an honor that very few people of *any color* achieve. The amount of Natives who have won this honor?

Almost non-existent.

So that's rare enough. But if a person were to check Billy Frank's arrest record, you'd probably think that his chance of winning *any* award from the government was probably the same as Billy the Kid, Al Capone or Wild Bill Hickok. In fact, maybe Billy Frank, Jr. had *less* of a chance than those guys—they didn't get arrested nearly as many times as he did.

He was arrested over 50 times. He must have been a bad dude, right?

The truth is that Uncle Billy Frank was arrested over 50 times for you. And for me. He was arrested for Native kids that he would never meet and many who would never know his name. Billy was arrested for telling white people that, no, Native people were *not* all dead and, yes, those white people *will* have to honor the agreements that they signed with Native people. If anybody thinks that Native people are marginalized today, 50 years ago white folks treated Natives (and all people of color really) infinitely worse and so people like Billy Frank *literally* had to stand up and stop white people from taking our food sources from right in from us.

We were starving. And languishing. And nobody knew about it because we were invisible.



*Tacoma News Tribune*

So Billy Frank made white folks see him. He was conspicuous and got arrested again and again and again and again with no end in sight—there was no guarantee that he would *ever* see the day when he would have the right to feed his family as his father did and his father before that. In hindsight we can say that it was a brave thing and speculate that we would have done the same but the truth is that we wouldn't have because no one else did...nobody wanted to go to jail 50 times and there was no one way to know that it would stop at 50.

But Uncle Billy was a warrior. He kept on in spite of common sense saying he should stop. He never quit, because he wanted his boys and his nieces and nephews to be able to feed their family and didn't want them to be invisible. So he kept on. In spite of getting beat on and shot at and getting criticized from his own people, his own Native people that didn't see the bigger picture and didn't want to upset the status quo. His treatment from Native people was very similar to Martin Luther King, Jr. who fought for the equal treatment of black people despite taking heavy criticism from other black folks who just didn't get it.

Now they call both of them—Martin Luther King, Jr. and Billy Frank, Jr.—heroes.

But the truth is that Billy Frank, Jr. was *already* a national hero, well before President Obama recognized his bravery, his power and his courage. He didn't need the

Presidential Medal of Freedom to confirm that he was one of the bravest warriors that ever walked this continent.

He was already that.

There's a saying that a person doesn't die until people stop saying their name; Uncle Billy will never die if that's true. He was one of the first people in the modern age to begin giving Native people our self-esteem back, to fight back to the forces of anti-Indigenusness and manifest destiny. On that fateful Tuesday night a few weeks ago, it was only appropriate that his beloved daughter-in-law Peggen Frank and beloved niece Nancy Shippentower-Games were the ones to accept the award on behalf of the Frank family. They looked beautiful and represented the powerful feminine strength that was very present during the Fishing Wars. They showed the strength of Native femininity that has kept our communities alive during the past century and a half when Native people were invisible and there were constant assaults on our physical bodies as well as self-esteem.

Uncle Billy didn't get arrested so that he would someday become national hero—it was enough that he was able to feed his family. He did it for Native people, not for the country. And it is Native people who benefit every single day from his willingness to sacrifice his time, his freedom, and indeed his life for us.

He was already a hero; it's just that the rest of the country finally found out about it.

Gyasi Ross, Editor at Large

Blackfeet Nation/Suquamish Territories

AUTHOR: PROJECT "ISSKOOTSIK" (BEFORE HERE WAS HERE)

AUDIOBOOK AVAILABLE NOW at [shop.kreecs.com](http://shop.kreecs.com)

Twitter: [@BigIndianGyasi](https://twitter.com/BigIndianGyasi)

*Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/12/19/indigenous-hell-raiser-national-hero-billy-frank-jr-wins-presidential-medal-freedom>*

## **Peabody Essex Museum receives grant to support Native American Fellowship**



**By Malcolm Gay** GLOBE STAFF DECEMBER 22, 2015

The Peabody Essex Museum has received a \$750,000 grant to expand a fellowship program intended to train aspiring Native American museum professionals. The three-year grant, awarded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, will enable the museum to increase the number of fellows it admits annually, extend the program to 12 weeks, and introduce more formal mentoring programs.

“We’re absolutely delighted to be partnering with the Mellon Foundation,” said PEM director Dan Monroe. “It offers an opportunity for more young Native American leaders to significantly strengthen their capabilities to be successful in many cultural arenas — be it in their communities or in the context of their existing institutions, whether it’s an art museum like PEM or another organization.”

First created by the museum six years ago, the Native American Fellowship program is believed to be the only one of its kind in the country. Reserved for students of Native American or native Hawaiian descent, the program provides specific fellowships in curatorial, educational, media, and manuscript processing.

The museum had previously funded the fellowships on its own, with fellows contributing research to exhibitions such as “Native Fashion Now,” which is currently on view. Monroe said the new grant would enable the museum to provide fellows with more hands-on experience in the day-to-day operations of an institution.

“We want to strengthen the value of the program that we’re offering,” said Monroe, who added that the museum would continue its own financing of the program. “We expect them to come in and function and work at a professional level. But we also want to bring

in people with expertise in fund-raising, communications, organizational politics — opportunities that are simply not provided in terms of their academic programs.”

Mariët Westermann, vice president of the Mellon Foundation, said the grant to the PEM was in keeping with the Foundation’s ongoing efforts to increase staff, audience, and programming diversity within art museums, making them “more representative of the great and rapidly changing diversity of the American people.”

Westermann noted that a recent survey conducted by the Mellon Foundation (along with the Association of Art Museum Directors and the American Alliance of Museums) found that while women now make up some 60 percent of museum workers, minorities remain woefully under-represented in leadership positions.

The study found that while minorities comprise 28 percent of museum staffs, the vast majority work in security, facilities, finance, and human resources. When it came to roles such as curators, conservators, and educators, however, minorities were significantly underrepresented. Blacks accounting for only 4 percent of the workforce, “White Hispanics” just 3 percent. Native Americans and native Hawaiians registered zero percent for such positions.

“We believe much more can be done with the country’s museums to create better and broader understanding of this great cultural heritage,” said Westermann, who praised PEM’s “record of training emerging scholars and museum professionals” of Native American origin. “A new generation of curators, many from Native communities, has a crucial role to play in this work.”

Monroe said the Salem museum, which houses nearly 15,000 Native American objects, has a special commitment to indigenous peoples.

“Since we possess one of the most important collections of Native American art we have responsibilities that exceed simply assuring that it’s properly cared for and that we’re doing innovative exhibitions and publications,” he said. “We feel a responsibility for actually helping steward and support the continuation and advancement of Native American and native Hawaiian cultures.”

**Direct Link:** <https://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/2015/12/22/peabody-essex-museum-receives-grant-support-native-american-fellowship/CQ1rayySSE3HD5jGAsuaqL/story.html>

## **Senate Passed Bill Expediting Fossil Fuel Extraction on Native American Land Two Days Before Paris Agreement**

Posted: 12/20/2015 9:31 pm EST Updated: 12/20/2015 9:59 pm EST

Cross-Posted from [\*DeSmogBlog\*](#), Steve Horn



*Photo Credit: Indigenous Environmental Network*

Indigenous peoples' rights nearly did not make it into the global deal signed at the United Nations COP21 climate summit in Paris, serving as one of the more controversial sticking points in the road toward the signing of the Paris Agreement. Eventually, though, the Paris Agreement came to include five mentions of the importance of protecting indigenous rights with regards to climate change.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Senate has decided to grant indigenous people a different set of rights altogether: the right to have oil and coal extracted from their ancestral lands in a streamlined manner. The rights to do so would be granted in a bill that passed unanimously in the Senate two days before the Paris Agreement.

Sponsored by U.S. Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY), the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act Amendments of 2015's (S.209) passage in the Senate received no media coverage besides a press release disseminated by Barrasso's office and by the office of co-sponsor U.S. Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT).

In an opinion piece published in November by Indian Country Today, Barrasso lauded the bill for "empower[ing] tribes to develop their own energy resources" and "streamlin[ing]...approvals of many energy development transactions."

"This will help to empower--not hinder--tribal self-governance and prosperity," reads the article. "This legislation will empower tribes to develop their own energy resources on their lands. It will also streamline certain approvals of many energy development transactions, such as business agreements, right-of-ways and leases on Indian lands."

## Follow the Money

The Senate bill's passage came in the aftermath of a years-long lobbying effort by corporate interests, led in the forefront by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber published a letter praising the bill after it passed in the Senate and also deployed a team of lobbyists to advocate for the bill in all three quarters of 2015 and all four quarters of 2014 for the bill's predecessor, S.2132.

"S. 209 would be an important step in furthering efforts by Congress to encourage economic development throughout Indian Country," the letter reads. "The Chamber urges

the Senate and House committees of jurisdiction to work together towards a compromise as expeditiously as practicable."

Environmental advocacy and legal group Earthjustice lobbied against the bill.

Tester has \$15,001 to \$50,000 worth of coal utility giant American Electric Power's stock holdings and both Tester and Barrasso have received hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign contributions from the fossil fuel industry throughout their political careers. After passing on December 11, the Senate referred S. 209 to House Natural Resources Committee and the House Energy and Commerce Committee for votes. House Natural Resources Committee chairman, U.S. Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT) -- who has taken more from the oil and gas industry in campaign contributions than any other sector throughout his political career -- appears eager to help pass the bill.

"I am pleased the Senate has followed suit and acted on legislation to alleviate barriers that currently prevent Native Americans from harnessing resources on their own land," Bishop said in a December 11 press release. "I look forward to working with the Senate to get a final package on the President's desk."

Congressional session has closed for 2015 and the White House has not yet signaled if it would veto the bill if it arrived at its desk when session begins anew in 2016.

**Direct Link:** [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/steve-horn/senate-passed-bill-expedi\\_b\\_8851194.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/steve-horn/senate-passed-bill-expedi_b_8851194.html)

## Treatment program brings Native tradition to recovery

John Hult, [jhult@argusleader.com](mailto:jhult@argusleader.com) 3:56 p.m. CST December 20, 2015



Native Americans make up less than 9 percent of South Dakota's population, but represent a third of its prison population.

History and historical trauma is a thick thread in the tangled web of explanations for that longstanding statistic, and Theresa Henry believes addressing those issues is key to improving the outcomes for her people.

Henry is a counselor at the Glory House in Sioux Falls, where parolees and probationers spend time before their full return to the community.

Since the fall, Henry's folded the concept of historical trauma and Lakota, Dakota and Nakota tradition into an addiction treatment program designed to appeal to Native Americans.

The goal of Owaste, Henry said, is to offer a framework for sobriety, self-respect and long-term success rooted in the rich cultural traditions eroded by the influence of white boarding schools and decades of imposed assimilation.

"The healing is to bring them back to who they are, to feel good about who they are and to feel good about their family of origin," he said.

Native Americans whose relatives were placed in boarding schools throughout the 20th Century still feel the impact of the cultural loss, Henry said.

Their parents and grandparents often turned to drugs or alcohol to tune out the traumas of the past, she said, and the cycle has perpetuated itself through physical or sexual abuse.

Participants in the program talk about the ripple effects of that trauma, Henry said, and getting to the heart of the cycle can help clients stop it.

"Once they've been educated, they can forgive their mother, they can forgive their fathers and say 'I understand why you did what you did,'" she said.

The program teaches forgiveness and sobriety through a marriage of traditional 12-step work and seven Native American traditions: Honesty, love, courage, humility, wisdom, respect and generosity.

The group uses pipe ceremonies, sweat lodge ceremonies and traditional prayers through song to help hammer the points home, and graduates are honored by an elder before their return to the community.

There have been eight graduates so far, Henry said, and she expects to see more complete the intensive program soon.

Robert Running Shield was one of the first graduates.

Running Shield has been through treatment before, but Henry's program helped him to own his sobriety in a way he hadn't in the past. Running Shield went to pow wows as a child and knew about the ceremonies, but his grandmother shied away from teaching him too much. She'd been educated by the boarding school system.

"Everything I was taught was Christian-based," Running Shield said.

Connecting Native Americans with a path to success based on their own culture helps participants see sobriety as something they can own, as opposed to something imposed by a culture perceived as an adversary.

“It takes some really unique cultural elements and incorporates it in a way that it makes sense,” said Dave Johnson, director of Glory House.

That doesn’t mean the program is exclusively for Native Americans, Johnson said.

It’s built on Native American themes, but it’s not just for Native Americans. It’s a different approach to treatment,” Johnson said.

The skeleton of the program has been a part of the Glory House’s offerings since 2008, when the halfway house first picked up the White Bison curriculum Henry expanded this fall.

The early signs are promising, Johnson said. The number of participants who complete Owaste sits at about 90 percent so far, Johnson said – a higher number than the Glory House sees for similar programs.

“It’s obviously something our clients are connecting to,” Johnson said.

Johnson credits Henry’s personal approach to her clients for some of the success.

Henry is a counselor with a job to do, she said, but she also sees herself as part of the traditions. That’s helped build bridges and trust for clients.

“I live this way of life. I believe in this way of life,” Henry said. “It’s not just a job for me.”

**Direct Link:** <http://www.argusleader.com/story/news/2015/12/20/treatment-program-brings-native-tradition-recovery/77568358/>

## **ABQ Charter School Set to Expand ‘Culturally Relevant Education’ to Other Grades**

Alysa Landry  
12/21/15

A fledgling charter school serving Native students in Albuquerque, New Mexico is poised to expand its student population.

Native American Community Academy, a small public charter school offering grades 6 through 12, this year celebrated its fourth class of high school graduates. The school,

which opened in 2006 with 85 students in grades 6 and 7, next fall will welcome its first-ever incoming kindergarten class.

It's part of a plan to expand the school to include grades k-12 in the next five years, said Anpao Duta Flying Earth, head of the school and one of its co-founders.

"We'll grow a grade every year," he said. "Next year we'll have kindergarten and first grade, then as those students progress we'll keep adding grades until we have the full k-12."

The step marks completion of a vision more than two decades old, Flying Earth said. Twenty years ago, members of Albuquerque's Native communities started discussing ways to better meet the unique needs of Native students. The result was Native American Community Academy, housed in the last standing building of the old Albuquerque Indian School and located across the street from the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center.

Albuquerque, the largest city in New Mexico, supports the 31<sup>st</sup> largest school district in the nation, with 142 schools scattered across 1,200 square miles. Of the district's 87,000 students, only 4 percent are Native.

"One of the first things that came up in our preliminary discussions was the idea of holistic wellness," Flying Earth said. "We wanted to focus not just on intellectual growth, but also take into consideration emotional wellbeing, physical health, how students are doing in terms of relationships with their families, neighborhoods and tribes."

Now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, NACA supports 394 students from 60 different tribes and 18 different ethnicities, Flying Earth said. Between 85 and 90 percent of the student population self-identifies as Native, and they come to the school from Albuquerque or surrounding areas, including nearby pueblos.

"I think our student body represents the full continuum of how people identify as Native Americans," he said. "We have the whole dichotomy of students who are exploring what it means to be Native American and students who are constantly and consistently engaged in culture, language and tradition."

NACA has gained a reputation for its consistent focus on Native culture and language, said Kara Bobroff, executive director of the school and one of its founders. Bobroff, who previously worked as a teacher and assistant principal at other schools, said a kind of "cultural fragmentation" takes place in mainstream public schools.

"Language programs often are dependent on location of the schools and available staff, and that changes by grade or school," she said. "Even schools on reservations are not necessarily grounded in the community's core values."

NACA strives to offer reliable cultural education for students throughout their k-12 years. All students have access to five different Native languages, including Navajo, Lakota and Tiwa. Additionally, all required classes are viewed through a Native lens: social studies focuses on Native American history and literature classes focus on Native writings.

“Each class has its own take on the indigenous perspective,” Bobroff said. “The idea is that 90 percent of the time students are in school they’re learning about things that are relevant from the past and present and coming up with ideas about how they can be involved in their Native communities.”

It’s an approach Flying Earth calls “culturally relevant education.”

“Obviously we’re paying attention to state standards and requirements,” he said. “But we’re not compromising our culture.”

For Maggie Seawright, a 2013 graduate from NACA, the experience was life-changing. Now a junior at Dartmouth College, Seawright started attending NACA in seventh grade—the second year the school was open.

Seawright, who is Lakota, attended elementary school in Albuquerque, where she was one of three Native students.

“It was a good experience, but there was not a lot of support from the school or the system the school was in,” she said. “I had that hunger to understand my culture. I went to powwows and knew a couple of words in my language, but I really didn’t have the opportunity to explore it.”

Seawright discovered NACA at a community event and, though she was only 11 at the time, immediately asked to be enrolled. That decision has shaped her life, she said.

“I got to take classes in my Lakota language, but it didn’t dawn on me until later that this was an amazing opportunity,” she said. “I wouldn’t be the person I am today with knowing my language or having the connection with my ancestors.”

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/12/21/abq-charter-school-set-expand-culturally-relevant-education-other-grades-162750>

## **Pot and Pretendians**

Ruth Hopkins

12/21/15

I’ve heard it dozens of times: folks justify the appropriation of Native culture and the theft of sacred rites and ceremonies by saying there’s no injury; that it’s essentially harmless, or even beneficial.

Wrong. How does redface, be it physical, mental or spiritual, aside from making a mockery of us Originals, further colonial conquest and genocide? Let me count the ways...

I could point you in the direction of studies that show how appropriation harms Native youth psychologically, provide you with a million personal stories from Native people

who experience microaggressions on a daily basis, or paint the big picture for you, linking hipster headdresses, race based mascots and for-profit sweat lodges to the persistent systemic oppression of Native peoples from Columbus's arrival to the present, but for now, let me give you one contemporary example.

Recently, officers in Sonoma County, California, confiscated marijuana plants from the Oklevueha Native American Church. Members of the church say the plants are sacred and used ceremonially. They've since taken the matter to Federal Court, suing Sonoma County, its Sheriff, and the Governor of California, claiming they've been discriminated against under the Constitution of the state of California, and alleging rights violations under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act. The group is seeking an injunction and praying for damages as a remedy.

Oklevueha members assert that marijuana is integral to their sacraments, just like peyote.

There's just one problem. It's not. While I'm not a member of the Native American Church, I practice Dakota/Lakota spirituality, and marijuana has not, nor has it ever been, used as a part of ceremony. While some species of hemp have always grown in the western hemisphere, the marijuana people smoke today is native to Asia. It's propagation in the Americas is relatively new. I also know a few individuals who put weed in their canupa (sacred pipe), and were shunned for it.

I spoke to a few Native people who frequent Native American Church ceremonies, and they told me the same thing one of the most well-known Lakota medicine men in the United States told me: marijuana is not a part of our sacrament.

Now don't misinterpret me here. Marijuana is medicinal, as are many plants utilized by Indigenous people. However, claiming its part of our spirituality to avoid catching a case threatens the rights of actual Natives who deserve protection under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act.

Yes, I said 'actual Natives.' You see, the [Oklevueha Native American Church](#), established in April 1997 in Gunnison, Utah, doesn't appear legitimate. On their website, they offer membership to those who "desire to be blessed by having access to Native American Ceremonies and Medicines (such as Peyote, San Pedro, Ayahuasca and Cannabis) without legal interference." The leader of this church is James Warren 'Flaming Eagle' Mooney. He claims to be Seminole. If you research Mr. Mooney online, you'll uncover a veritable maze of a pretendian who is desperately trying to prove he's Native. He claims to be a direct descendant of Osceola, but data on his family tree is sketchy. So is his basic assertion of Native lineage. He's not enrolled in a state or federally recognized Tribe. As you scroll, be prepared to wade through a swamp of *anecdotal* evidence and hearsay from unqualified sources offered up as proof of his ancestry and the right to call himself "Medicine Man Emeritus." By the way, let me clue you in on a little secret: I don't know a single wicasa wakan (medicine man) who calls himself that. Be suspicious of anyone who is a self-proclaimed medicine man or "shaman." Yet 'Flaming Eagle' would have us believe he was commanded by a Lakota to "take this medicine to the whiteman."

When non-Natives steal ceremonies from us, it creates a spiritual harm. These sacred rites have real power, and that's not to be taken lightly. How dare people take a belief system that our Native ancestors have bled for and died to protect, only to twist it and exploit it for personal gain.

The ways of the pipe and the teachings of the Native American Church are not a cover for white people to avoid responsibility, and it's blasphemous to consider them a means to profit making venture.

Have we learned nothing from the deaths that occurred in Sedona? James Arthur Ray was convicted of three counts of negligent homicide in 2010 for those who died thanks to his improperly run new age "sweat lodge."

Meanwhile, the legal action of Oklevueha Native American Church in the Federal court system could affect the rights and protections of Natives everywhere.

As we say on Twitter, "This is why we can't have nice things." We must remain vigilant against those who seek to desecrate our ceremonies, dehumanize us, and homogenize and erase our cultures. The consequences for failing to keep watch and protect our legacies are real.

*Ruth Hopkins (Sisseton Wahpeton & Mdewakanton Dakota, Hunkpapa Lakota) is a writer, blogger, biologist, activist and judge.*

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/12/21/pot-and-pretendians>

## Chief Wahoo Could Be Next Native American Trademark Overturned with New Petition

Posted By Sam Allard on Tue, Dec 22, 2015 at 12:00 pm



Local Native Americans and their legal team announce trademark petition at annual Christmas party.

Lawyers for local Native Americans have drafted a petition asking for the immediate cancellation of the Cleveland Indians' Chief Wahoo trademark. The petition, they say, will be filed with the **Trademark Trial and Appeal Board** as soon as funds for filing fees become available.

"The [Chief Wahoo] logo is a crude caricature of a proud and abused race of people that was and is a pejorative, derogatory, denigrating, offensive, scandalous, contemptuous, disreputable, disparaging, and racist designation of Native American people," reads the drafted petition, provided exclusively to *Scene*.

The petition additionally asks for an estimated \$9 billion in damages. Native Americans say they are owed this money by the Indians' organization, based on profits generated by Chief Wahoo over the course of "nearly 100 years of racism, discrimination and cultural perversion." Petitioners acknowledge, however, that monetary recovery is not part of a trademark cancellation.

The language of the petition is consciously very similar to the Washington Redskins' trademark filing in 2014 (*Blackhorse v. Pro-Football Inc.*), in which the TTAB ruled that the name "Redskins" was disparaging to Native Americans.

"Chief Wahoo is the caricature of an Indian, incorporating a completely red skin tone," reads the Cleveland petition. "This is the non-verbal communication of the racial slur, 'redskins,' which the TTAB has ruled to lack federal trademark protection."

The petition will be filed on behalf of People Not Mascots, Inc.; **Robert Roche, the Director of the American Indian Education Center (AIEC)**; and others. Attorney Lisa Mach, who drafted the petition and serves on the AIEC's Executive Board, said there would be a total of five petitioners (just like in *Blackhorse*) and that filing fees would be \$300 per petitioner.

Much like in the 2014 case, if the Wahoo trademark were to be canceled, the Cleveland Indians would not be required to change their name (or even stop using the Chief Wahoo logo). It simply would mean that the baseball team could no longer claim exclusive ownership. Anyone could sell Chief Wahoo memorabilia. Customs and Border Patrol, for example, would no longer be required to block the importation of counterfeit goods bearing Wahoo's likeness.



Robert Roche said that for years, he has tried to appeal to the baseball team on moral and ethical grounds to no avail. **He has been protesting with other Native American organizations** and social justice activists on the Tribe's opening day for decades.

The Penobscot Nation, from which Indians' outfielder Louis Sockalexis hailed, contacted the Cleveland Indians via a resolution in 2000. It called for the cancellation of Chief Wahoo and asked the team to advocate "for the elimination of racist images of Indians." (Sockalexis is **the putative inspiration** for the Indians' team name). But the Indians' organization never responded.

Roche now says that a trademark cancellation petition feels like their only recourse.

"With these people, [Indians' baseball executives], if you don't go after their pocketbooks, they don't care at all," Roche told *Scene* in 2014,

At the AIEC's Annual Christmas party Sunday afternoon, lawyers announced the forthcoming petition to the gathered families.

"We don't want to eliminate Chief Wahoo," said Joseph Meissner, one of the attorneys. "We just want to retire him. He has served long enough. The poor guy has been used by the Cleveland Indians baseball team, probably to earn billions of dollars. That's blood money from Native Americans."

Bob Begin, attorney and former pastor at St. Colman's Parish, said in a brief statement that he remained "unbelieving" that so many people still supported Chief Wahoo.

"This is obviously offensive," he said. "Once people tell me, 'this offends me,' I'd never continue using it."

Tim Russo, a research assistant in Meissner's office (and former candidate for County Executive), is conducting international jurisdictional research on behalf of the petitioners. Prominent local attorneys James Levin and Terry Gilbert, who were not present Sunday, are also members of the legal team.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.clevescene.com/scene-and-heard/archives/2015/12/22/chief-wahoo-could-be-next-native-american-trademark-overturned-with-new-petition>

## **New Native American-run Starbucks biggest in state**

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Joanna Toya, of Zia Pueblo, dances prior to the ribbon-cutting ceremony in front of the new Starbucks along 12 Street near Interstate 40 on Monday. (Roberto E. Rosales/Journal)

By Jessica Dyer / Journal Staff Writer

Monday, December 21st, 2015 at 3:39pm



Jorge Lucero works at a table near a Kiva fireplace in the seating area of the new Starbucks along 12 Street near Interstate 40 on Monday. (Roberto E. Rosales/Journal)



Ceramic cup designs made by local Pueblo artists are on display inside the new Starbucks along 12 Street near Interstate 40. (Roberto E. Rosales/Journal)

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — As a crowd gathered for a peek inside the city's newest Starbucks on Monday morning, a pair of young women sat down at a table and surveyed their surroundings.

"This place," one said to the other, "is so big."

In a sea of new Starbucks cropping up around Albuquerque, the just-opened cafe along 12th Street has the distinction of being the largest. In fact, at almost 5,000 square feet with the patio, it is the biggest Starbucks anywhere in New Mexico, according to the project's developers. It can seat an estimated 175, including about 75 outside and up to 14 in its community room.

But sheer size is just one of the cafe's distinguishing features. It is also the only stand-alone Starbucks licensed to a Native American-owned company in the country — it is locally owned and operated by New Mexico's 19 pueblos and sits on what was once the Albuquerque Indian School grounds near Interstate 40.

So though it bears one of the world's most recognizable brand names, it doesn't look like the other 23,000-plus Starbucks around the world. It features two kiva fireplaces, a wall of historic pueblo photographs and commissioned artwork like a painting from Laguna's Marla Allison and a series of hand-crafted pieces of pottery designed in the shape of a Starbucks travel mug.

"Art is central to pueblo life," said Dwayne Virgint, executive vice president and chief operating officer for Indian Pueblos Marketing Inc., the pueblo-owned corporation behind the development. "It's part of what makes us a unique Starbucks."

But it's still a Starbucks, and Virgint said the pueblo corporation will try to stay at the forefront of any corporate trends. He said it has asked to be among the test stores when Starbucks ultimately decides to roll out beer and wine sales in New Mexico, as it has done in other states.

The cafe's grand opening, celebrated Monday with native dancing and a ribbon-cutting, marks what officials say will be a new wave of commercial activity at the site. Michael Canfield, the pueblo corporation's president and CEO, said it is the first of three new buildings planned for this phase of development. The corporation wants brewpubs, restaurants and other retail businesses to fill out the approximately 3-acre parcel, and Canfield said it's closing in on a deal with the next tenant.

"We're working with a group that wants to come in. We're not allowed to (reveal) the name, but we're very excited about our next project," he said. "We think we can come to some sort of agreement in the next 60 days or so."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.abqjournal.com/694612/abqnewsseeker/new-abq-starbucks-is-biggest-in-state.html>

# Native American Tribes Donate \$600,000 to Terrorist Attack Victims

Simon Moya-Smith

12/21/15

Two Native American tribes have jointly donated \$600,000 to aid the victims of a terrorist attack that claimed the lives of 14 people at a disabilities service center in San Bernardino, California, earlier this month.

The San Manuel Band of Mission Indians and Morongo Band of Mission Indians of Southern California made the donation to the San Bernardino United Relief Fund launched by the health and human services nonprofit Arrowhead United Way.



*Lynn Valbuena, chairwoman of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians. Photo courtesy San Manuel Band of Mission Indians.*

“This region of southern California is our home, our shared community,” Lynn Valbuena, chairwoman of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, said in a press release. “San Manuel and Morongo have joined together at this time to reach out to those impacted so our community might recover to a place of normalcy.”

On December 2, Syed Rizwan Farook and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, opened fire at the Inland Regional Center killing 14 and injuring 22. Both were killed after a shootout with police.

James Ramos, former chairman of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, was elected Chairman of the Board of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors this year. Ramos is the first Native American elected to the position.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/12/21/native-american-tribes-donate-600000-terrorist-attack-victims-162839>

## Indigenous Bolivian women climb mountains to deliver food, supplies to tourists

Published December 22, 2015

*Fox News Latino*



In this Dec. 16, 2015 photo, Aymara indigenous women pose for a picture as they reach the peak of the Huayna Potosi mountain on the outskirts of El Alto, Bolivia. From left are Cecilia Llusco, Juana Rufina Llusco Alana, Janet Mamani Callisaya, Domitila Alana Llusco, Marga Alana Llusco, Virginia Quispe Colque, Pacesa Llusco Alana, Lidia Huayllas, Bertha Vetia, Dora Magueno and Ana Gonzales. (AP Photo/Juan Karita)

LA PAZ, BOLIVIA (AP) – At first glance, the indigenous Bolivian women don't look much like mountain climbers, with their colorful, multilayered skirts and fringed shawls.

But their helmets, polarized goggles and crampons attached to their shoes give them away as mountaineers who accompany their husbands, often as cooks and porters, as they guide tourists scaling the local peaks.

Eleven of these Aymara women, ranging in age from 20 to 50 years old, earlier this month made the two-day climb up the 19,974-foot (6,099-meter) high Huayna Potosi, located near La Paz, with Lake Titicaca to the back and surrounded by snowy Andean peaks.

They started their climbing careers working for tourist agencies, carrying food and other equipment for the foreign mountaineers to the base camp, located at 1,116 feet (5,130 meters).

"First, I was a porter, then a cook," said 41-year-old Domitila Alana Llusco. "But the tourists asked me what it was like up on Huayna Potosi and I had to climb up so I could find out and tell them."

Alana said she had a hard time finding appropriate gear she could afford when she started 15 years ago.

"My feet are small, there are no boots," she said. "But nothing stopped me and I have reached the peak of three mountains."

Though they cling to their traditional clothing, these mountaineers aren't typical indigenous women.

"Women also have the right to climb mountains," said Adrian Quispe, one of the mountain guides. "It's not just men who are allowed. Women of all ages can go."

And the money is good. While the minimum wage for a housekeeper is around \$175 a month, guides can earn \$35 a day and the female cooks about \$20 a day.

As they climb, the women wear thermal sweat suits under their traditional clothing. Only in the last part of the climb up to the top do the women remove their skirts, to prevent accidents.

They start the last piece of their ascent after midnight to take advantage of the hardness of the snow, hoping to reach the top by dawn.

Some of the youngest in the group now dream of climbing even higher someday, to the top of Aconcagua, which at 22,834 feet (6,960 meters) is not only the highest peak in the Andes, but also the highest mountain outside Asia.

**Direct Link:** <http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/lifestyle/2015/12/22/indigenous-bolivian-women-scale-mountains-outside-la-paz/>

## **Fight Continues for Indigenous Peoples Day in Tucson, Arizona**

Gabriela Maya Bernadett  
12/22/15

Months after the annual federal holiday in October honoring Christopher Columbus, a Tucson-based organization continues to work to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day in the city.

The effort, which started in January, is being led by Jose Matus, Pascua Yaqui tribal member and Executive Director of the Indigenous Alliance Without Borders (Alianza Indígena Sin Fronteras or IAWB).

“We as indigenous people have more to offer than casinos and popovers,” Matus said. “We have contributed to this community and continue to do that. We have people that have graduated from college, are lawyers, doctors, but people don’t see that.”

The organization works with tribes affected by the US-Mexico border. The idea to start an Indigenous Peoples Day campaign came from a board member, and from there the Tucson Indigenous Peoples Day Committee was created.

The group first approached San Xavier District, located within the city of Tucson, and one of the eleven districts of the Tohono O’odham Nation.

After they passed a resolution declaring the second Monday of October Indigenous Peoples Day two more tribes, the Tohono O’odham Nation and Pascua Yaqui, plus the City of South Tucson , followed with resolutions of their own. South Tucson and the city of Tucson are different cities.

The approach, Matus says, is to start reaching out to the sister tribes of the O’odham, which are the Gila River Indian Community, Ak-Chin Indian Community, and Salt River Indian Community, and from there eventually have resolutions from all 22 tribes in the state.

The organization plans to start approaching local cities, and with their support convince Phoenix and Tucson, the two biggest cities in Arizona, to adopt an Indigenous Peoples Day resolution.

Matus said he hopes that a state-wide holiday like Indigenous Peoples Day will promote awareness of the substantial impact that indigenous people have on the state.

According to the 2010 census, about 5-percent of the Arizona population is Native American, and more than one quarter of the land belongs to tribes.

“We as indigenous people have never been recognized and respected as we should be,” Matus said. He said he hopes that with the push not only in Arizona but nation-wide to recognize Indigenous Peoples Day instead of Columbus Day, Native Americans will finally get the respect they deserve.

States and cities across the U.S. have opted for Indigenous Peoples Day over Columbus Day, including Minneapolis and St. Paul Minnesota, Portland, Oregon, Anchorage, Alaska, and Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/12/22/fight-continues-indigenous-peoples-day-arizona-162851>

## **Hans C. Walker Jr., Trailblazing Native American Lawyer, Walks On at 89**

Suzette Brewer

12/23/15

Hans C. Walker Jr., one of the first Native American lawyers to lead the push to enforce tribal treaty rights, died at his home in Alexandria, Virginia, on Sunday, December 20. He was 89.

Walker, who was Mandan, began his legal career in 1960 as general counsel for the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation of North Dakota, of which he was a member. From 1965-1982, he held several posts in the U.S. Department of the Interior, including assistant solicitor, director of the office of Indian water rights, and associate solicitor for Indian Affairs. In 1988, Walker joined Hobbs, Straus, Dean & Walker as a partner, whose practice areas included tribal self-determination, taxation, Indian gaming, jurisdiction, trust and restricted Indian lands and water rights.

“I met Hans in 1963 and we were friends before we were partners,” said Jerry Straus, founding partner at Hobbs Straus, a national leader in federal Indian law. “He was one of the sharpest legal minds I’ve ever known who made extraordinary, groundbreaking contributions to the development of Indian law that were immensely helpful to the tribes. He will be sorely missed.”

Most recently, Walker represented the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe in its ongoing suit for the return of thousands of acres of land taken by the State of New York in violation of the Non-Intercourse Act. Walker also wrote many decisions and prepared manuals on taxation and gaming that are still widely used in Indian country.

“I had the great privilege to work with Hans as a young legal intern in the summer of 1969 at the Solicitor’s office at the Department of the Interior,” said John Echohawk, executive director and co-founder of the [Native American Rights Fund](#). “It was my first time in D.C. and he was very knowledgeable about federal Indian law, which was impressive, considering that at that time we were still learning and trying to move away from the Termination Era. I learned a lot from him that summer.”

Walker, a member of the Lowcat clan of the Mandan, was born on December 15, 1926 in the community of Elbowoods on the Ft. Berthold Indian Reservation in North Dakota, which was subsequently flooded and wiped from the map after the construction of the Garrison Dam. He attended high school at Haskell Institute in Kansas, which was at that time an Indian boarding school. After a stint in the Navy, Walker attended college and law school on the G.I. bill, receiving his LL.B in 1960 from the University of North Dakota, where he served on the board of editors of the Law Review. He was a member of the District of Columbia and North Dakota bars.

“He was a pioneer who broke through every barrier in his way and was an inspiration to me and countless others across Indian country and beyond,” said Walker’s son Reid, who is the communications director for Senator Maria Cantwell of Washington State. “My Dad was a voracious reader who never stopped learning. He grounded me in the traditions of our tribe,

but also wanted me to see the world—taking me to Beijing, Cairo, Athens and across Europe by the time I was 15. Those experiences shaped me and I was able to pass them on to my daughters. He will be greatly missed but will continue to inspire his family, tribe and future generations.”

He is survived by his wife, Barbara; his son, Reid Walker; and two granddaughters, Taylor and Lindsay.

A memorial service will take place on Monday, December 28, at the Everly-Wheatley Funeral Home at 1500 W. Braddock Road, in Alexandria, Virginia. Visitation will begin at noon, followed by a service at 1 p.m. A traditional Native service will be held in North Dakota at a later date.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/12/23/hans-c-walker-jr-trailblazing-native-american-lawyer-walks-89-162856>

## President Begaye confirms Nations support of Indian Child Welfare Act

Navajo-Hopi Observer,  
12/22/2015 11:06:00  
AM

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. - Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye called for the protection of Navajo children Dec. 10 in his support of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) during the opening banquet for the Navajo Division of Social Service in Albuquerque.



Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye speaks in support of the Indian Child Welfare Act Dec. 10. Submitted photo

"There is nothing more devastating than seeing a Navajo child being taken from their parents," Begaye said during the Casey Family Program's Navajo child work session. "The connection that exists between a child and their parent is strong. It's a sacred bond. In our support of the ICWA, we are protecting the connection between children, their parents and siblings."

Last week, Begaye delivered a letter to Sylvia Burwell, secretary of Health and Human Services, asking for her to support ICWA in enforcing that state courts investigate and verify the enrollment of Native American children in custody and foster care cases.

Begaye spoke about the history of Native American children forced to attend boarding schools to emphasize the historical trauma caused by the separation of Indian children from their families, culture and language. Begaye and his brothers attended boarding school as young men.

"Imagine your identity being erased," he said. "Imagine not being able to see your mother and father. Imagine knowing you have family but not being able to see them. The separation is too much. Now, imagine children who are separated from their families and cultures for the entirety of their lives."

The ICWA again came under fire July 7, 2015, when the Goldwater Institute filed a proposed class-action lawsuit in federal district court in Arizona challenging the constitutionality of the ICWA and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) guidelines that strengthen the legislation.

The lawsuit sparked a national discussion questioning the purpose of the ICWA. Begaye said the position of the Navajo Nation is that tribes, states and partners do everything to advocate for the legislation, which protects tribe's connection to Native American children.

Begaye said the lawsuit portrays the lifeways of Native Americans as insignificant while also portraying tribal communities as substandard.

"It makes you think about the issue in the questions it raises," he said. "Rather than go down that road, we, as Native Americans, need to know that we are just as good as anybody else."

The Goldwater lawsuit is a fight for the soul of tribal Nations because it challenges the equality of tribal Nations against non-tribal paradigms of societal standards not based in traditional culture or knowledge, Begaye said.

"Our traditional ways nurture our children and foster environments that are conducive to the success of our children," he said. "Navajo culture inherently protects the future generations as it does the elders."

Begaye expressed his gratitude to all the departments in attendance including the Health Education and Human Services Committee and Law and Order Committee delegates for coming together to support and address the importance of ICWA in keeping Navajo children with Navajo families. He called for the Nation's continued support of ICWA and for tribes to stand against the Goldwater Institute's lawsuit.

"Native Americans are just as good as any other society on Earth," Begaye said. "We

love our families and will stand with them. We need to make sure that every Navajo child in state custody or foster care doesn't have to go through life wondering who they are or who their parents are."

Vice President Jonathan Nez presented a welcome address the following morning supporting the president's position while also addressing positive, healthy families and homes on the Nation.

Nez said he agreed with the need for all tribal Nations to come forward with strong messages supporting the act. He said there is a need for the Nation to develop a strong strategy in combating the Goldwater Institute's messaging and media campaign.

The vice president also extended gratitude to the partners who organized the conference.

"What they are doing is chipping away at the sovereign rights of Native Americans, which can eventually extend beyond ICWA," he said. "What the Goldwater Institute is doing is wrong."

**Direct Link:**

<http://nhonews.com/main.asp?SectionID=1&SubsectionID=1&ArticleID=17258>

## **Washington Redskins may be able keep trademark on 'disparaging' name**

by Chris Isidore [@CNNMoney](#) December 23, 2015: 9:47 AM ET

The Washington Redskins may be able to trademark their controversial name after all. A federal appeals court ruled Tuesday that the government was wrong to reject trademarks of names that are deemed offensive.

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office had ruled in June 2014 that because the Redskins name is offensive to Native Americans, the team could not trademark its name. It cited federal law that prohibited "registering scandalous, immoral, or disparaging" trademarks. The team and the NFL have been fighting to keep the trademark in place ever since. The Redskins never actually lost their trademark -- those protections were kept in place during the appeals process.

The Court of Appeals ruling Tuesday did not directly involve the Redskins. It ruled that an Asian American rock band called The Slants had the right to trademark protections even if some people were offended by the name.

"The government enacted this law - and defends it today - because it disapproves of the messages conveyed by disparaging marks," wrote the court in its decision. "It is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment that the government may not penalize private speech merely because it disapproves of the message it conveys."

The NFL filed a statement to the court supporting The Slants.

"This freewheeling ability to deprive trademark owners of significant benefits because of what they say through their marks strikes at the very heart of the First Amendment values this country holds dear," the league argued.

Redskins team owner Daniel Snyder has insisted the name is not offensive to Native Americans, but many Native American groups dispute that and have fought the trademark in court. Some politicians, including President Obama, have urged the team to change its name.

Native Americans who are fighting the Redskins over the team's trademark filed motions in the case asking the court to uphold the prohibition of issuing government protections for trademarks that are considered offensive. It argued that the trademark owners could continue to use the name even without the government issuing legal protections.

"The refusal to register a trademark does not impair the applicant's free speech rights under the First Amendment," they argued.

Losing protection would have allowed anyone to sell goods with the Redskins name or logo without paying the league as they now must do.

The court's ruling suggests that the Redskins are in very good shape on their own appeal, set to be heard next year.

**Direct Link:** <http://money.cnn.com/2015/12/23/news/companies/redskins-trademark/>

## Why Aren't Costa Rica's Indigenous Students Graduating?

A community's fight against technology



REBECCA GIBIAN AND DIANA CRANDALL 7:30 AM ET

TALAMANCA, COSTA RICA — In a globalized society where people are buried in phones, computers, and tablets, the quiet calm of Costa Rica's Yorkín River evokes a sense of simpler times. The only disruption comes from the roar of a motor. The sound sputters from mechanized canoes that carry food, supplies, and passengers upstream to

the village of Yorkín, a community of 280 indigenous Bríbri people nestled against the Panamanian border.

Recently, the boats began carrying something new to the hard-to-reach community: cellphones.

The Bríbri are referred to as the “hidden people” of Costa Rica. It’s only been in recent decades that economic necessity has led the historically isolated community into developed areas of Talamanca, the province in which they live. This contact has exposed Yorkín to an unprecedented amount of information—and not all of it is welcomed. The rise of technology in Costa Rican society is the cause of mounting concern among some local community leaders as the next generation of Bríbri spend more time on their cellphones than with their school books. And the tech phenomenon may be having an unanticipated effect on the community: Many locals, academics, and activists suspect it helps explain why Yorkín’s high school hasn’t had a graduation ceremony in several years.

The last ceremony took place in 2010, when 12 students received their high-school diplomas. Since then, mobile phones have increased while graduating students have decreased. It appears that a combination of factors, including the influx of technology, high rates of poverty, and the Bríbri culture itself are contributing to the low graduation rates. According to UNICEF, in 2012, the typical indigenous child in Costa Rica attended school for an average of 3.4 years total, after which many of them dropped out; the average time spent in school nationwide is 7.6 years. It is a complex issue with which community leaders and experts alike are grappling.

Rolando, a high-ranking community leader in Yorkín, believes that technology use plays a significant role in the falling numbers of high-school graduates. “Sometimes when I take my lunch at noon... I see the students in classes using their phones, not using time wisely for classes,” Rolando said in Spanish through a translator. “They are just distracted with the devices.” He paints a startling dichotomy, but one not hard to find within Yorkín’s dense jungle. It’s increasingly common to see groups of four or five teenagers trudging through the muddy rainforest, the sound of their footsteps eclipsed by mp3s singing from their pockets. Pierced ears and ball caps cocked to the side are reminiscent of popular American music videos. Some teens want to learn English; others are interested in inking their bodies. None of these ideals are Bríbri.

\* \* \*

Worldwide, laptop and smartphone use in classrooms has risen. Fifty-seven percent of recent college grads around the world used a laptop, tablet, or smartphone in class at least sometimes, according to the Pew Research Center.

Yorkín’s students, however, cannot utilize technology within the classroom. For one, there is no current government program to help cater to the specific needs of indigenous communities so they can learn how to integrate technology into their education system. In

addition, there's no electricity in the school, so a generator has to be fired up before any technology can be used, explained Elizabeth Mitchel, a Peace Corps English teacher in Yorkín.



A dog chases a young Bríabri boy through the Yorkín river. (Rebecca Gibian)

Indeed, indigenous children in Costa Rica face educational obstacles that are very different than those of an urban Costa Rican student. For example, indigenous students suffer from illiteracy rates six times higher than the national average, [UNICEF reports](#): 30 percent of Costa Rica's indigenous children are illiterate, compared to 4.5 percent of the country's youth population at large. Some believe the national curriculum is specifically aimed at urban students, and many rural schools have no books for class, [the Middlebury Institute reports](#).

Pamela Araya, a psychology professor in the education department at the University of Costa Rica, thinks poverty has a huge impact on these statistics. "There's still a large poverty index in Costa Rica, and much of it is in rural communities," Araya said in Spanish to a translator. "One of the most common reasons [for children leaving school] is the economy."

"We transmit knowledge orally, practically, but the Internet is not the way we absorb knowledge."

But to Rolando, 22, technology only exacerbates the education problems created by poverty. "We transmit knowledge orally, practically, but [the Internet] is not the way we absorb knowledge," he said, echoing concerns held by others in the community, particularly elders. "We're in the middle of the river right now, and we don't know which side the current is going to take us. We know for sure we're going to fight to keep our culture and our value, but we have a lot of menace around. So, we don't know if that giant is going to take us down or not, and even though I feel strong—I feel that my family is going to keep fighting for the value and the culture—it's not going to be easy."

Roberto, 71, thinks that the Internet can be a huge distraction to students, and is worried about the lack of students graduating. "They'd rather be seeing porn, naked women and all of that, instead of being in the high school," he said in Spanish to a translator,

acknowledging that he has a phone that he uses to communicate with friends and family. “They are really lost with the Internet.”



Roberto, 71, stands in the small grocery store he built underneath his home. He uses his cellphone to call and message other members of the community. (Diana Crandall)

Others are more concerned about the impact of modernization on Bríbri culture. In fact, Mitchel believes that school in general is the culprit. “I think education in general has a great impact on their loss of culture here,” Mitchel said, “not only because of tourism, [but also] because they have a lot of mixture of groups here. There’s white people here, there’s people from other tribes, so therefore they can’t always speak in Bríbri. They’ve just lost their culture slowly.”

Marcos Guevara, an anthropology professor at the University of Costa Rica, emphatically agreed, adding that exposure to other societies is beneficial, too. “I am convinced that education really damages the culture, because the [current education system] really takes them away from [it],” Guevara said in Spanish through a translator. “But in a globalized world, thinking that they are isolated groups isn’t good either.”

Costa Rica’s education system was implemented nationwide in 1869. Historically, the national curriculum has been a major issue for indigenous students. The logic of the Costa Rican government was that indigenous students needed to assimilate to mainstream society. According to Araya, another goal was to “open up possibilities to people for professional development [and development of technical skills].” As a result, the last two generations of Bríbri students haven’t learned their own language, said Adilia Caravaca, a Costa Rican lawyer and peace activist. They learned Spanish in school like everyone else, and their interest in learning Bríbri declined overall.

The last two generations of Bríbri students haven’t learned their own language.

Not everyone takes this in stride. “If you don’t want to learn Bríbri, you might be out of the community. It’s a must,” Rolando said. “You have to learn. It’s our culture, those are our values.”

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When they reach age 12, Bríbri children in Yorkín are allowed to choose whether or not to continue their education. “As long as there are kids, they have the right to school, and it has to be available,” said Caravaca.

This year, Jimmy, 18, is one of two graduating students. He’s keen on studying criminology in college. “Right now I am focused on my studies, I would like to finish,” Jimmy said in Spanish through a translator. “Of course I feel sad that there are no other students graduating with me but right now I am mainly focused on me and what I want to do. I want to get the [diploma] and apply for a public college so I can continue developing myself with my studies.”

Minór, 23, is another one of the students who chose to stay in school; he was one of the graduating members of the class of 2010. Part of his motivation to finish school was his family. “I am the oldest one, so I have to be a good example for my brothers and sisters,” he said in Spanish through a translator.



Minór, 23, was part of the last graduating class in Yorkín. (Diana Crandall)

But whether or not his younger siblings will finish school is unclear. And Minór’s mother, Vidalia, is worried. “I have six boys and two girls, and as a mother I am very concerned, because I don’t want my kids to get affected because [of technology],” she said. “I really want to push them to continue to study so they might have a better future.”

The Pew Research Center reports that people in emerging and developing countries see the Internet as having a positive effect on education, but [42 percent of people across 32 countries](#) say it is a bad influence on morality. Araya believes that Bribri people can potentially harness technology to maintain and even enrich their culture, rather than let devices and exposure erode it. “I think that the indigenous people have the capacity to have this technological platform—to learn how to use it and also, according to their beliefs, choose whether to use it or not,” she said.

But Guevara was more ambivalent: “Technology can be a resource, but it can also take people away from their culture,” he said. “It really depends on the context of how you use it, if the tool is used to help, or not, in developing culture.”

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/12/costa-ricas-indigenous-students/421335/>